

# CINEFANTASTIQUE

Volume 8 Number 4

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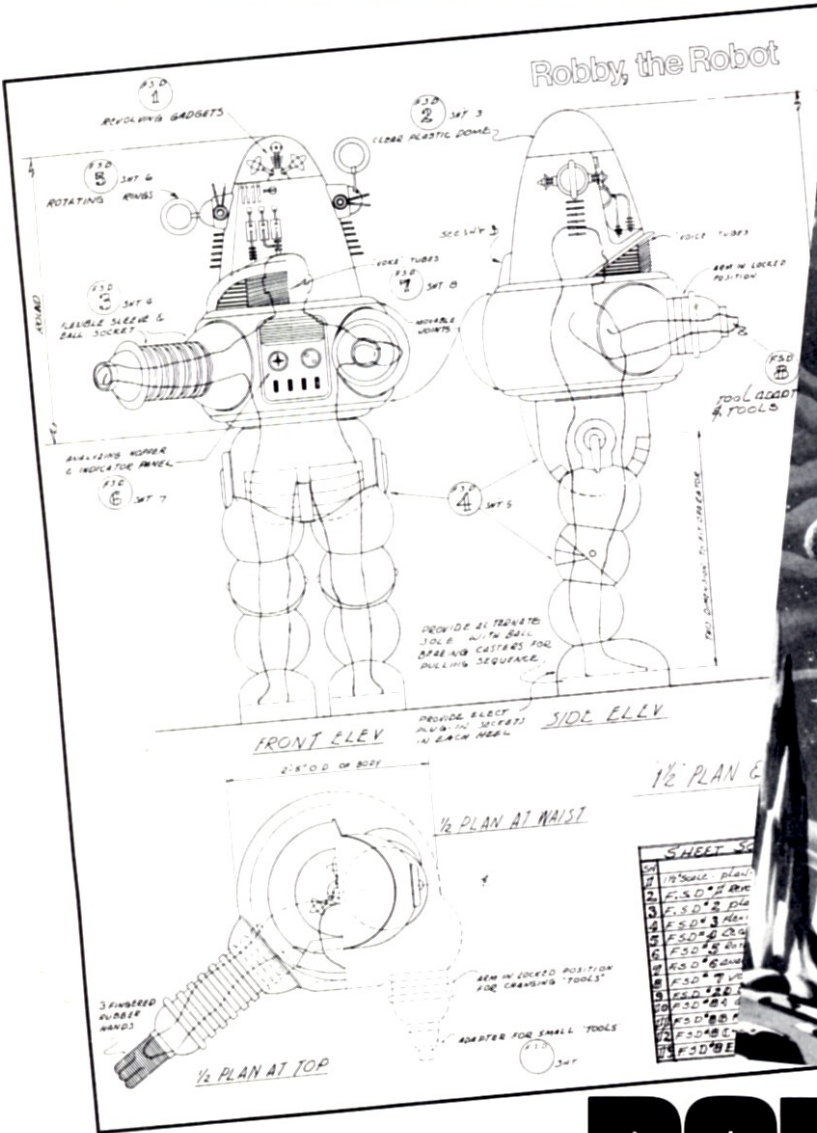


*Stone*

## DONNER ON SUPERMAN



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# SUMMER

# FEATURES

## SENSE OF WONDER by Frederick S. Clarke

We took a pass on doing a double number on SUPERMAN because the quality of the film, either artistically or technically, didn't seem to warrant much attention. We did find Don Shay's interview with director Richard Donner of sufficient interest to feature on this issue's cover however, primarily because it goes some distance in explaining why the film was as poor as it was. Donner talks candidly about his uphill battle to make SUPERMAN something more than a pale rehash of the comic book camp found in television's BATMAN. After reading his side of the story, you'll better understand the reasons behind his dismissal as director of SUPERMAN II, and the grim prospects in store for the sequel now that its completion is under the control of the producers Salkind. It is somewhat ironic that SUPERMAN's huge success at the boxoffice, which Donner is largely responsible for, gave the Salkinds enough muscle to boot him off the sequel, after they had failed to fire him during earlier filming. Warner Bros is obviously very pleased with the financial returns being garnered by SUPERMAN, but they've made a serious mistake in acquiescing to Donner's replacement, especially after having fought to keep him in the first place. What, we can wonder, made them change their minds after the film he made turned into their biggest boxoffice smash of all time?

A large part of this issue deals with what seems to be a bumper crop of model animation projects, planned, in production, in the can, or in release. While the sheer number of such projects seems to be a healthy sign for the field, there are a few ill omens. PLANET OF DINOSAURS, completed now for over a year, has yet to find an American distributor. Steven S. Wilson writes in detail about the outstanding effects work done for the film on a low budget. But good effects alone haven't been able to sell the film. If it fails to find a distributor, it will be the first model animation feature ever completed to go unreleased. This development, while certainly catastrophic to the filmmakers, may actually be beneficial to the field in the long run however, if only for driving home the fact that more attention must be paid to improving the quality of the films themselves, apart from their effects. The real bad news is word of the collapse of TIMEGATE, in an article that clears up some of the rumors behind the demise of Jim Danforth's "dream project." □

### DONNER ON SUPERMAN

The mind behind the man of steel tells all. A candid conversation with the director of the most expensive science fiction film ever made, how he dealt with insecure producers, and the complete story of why he was fired before completing the sequel. Interview by Don Shay 12

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Producer George Pal is back! The man who brought you THE TIME MACHINE and WAR OF THE WORLDS is busy at work, in preproduction on his latest excursion into science fiction, a realistically adult thriller based on the novel by Philip Wylie. by Peter S. Perakos and Frederick S. Clarke 4

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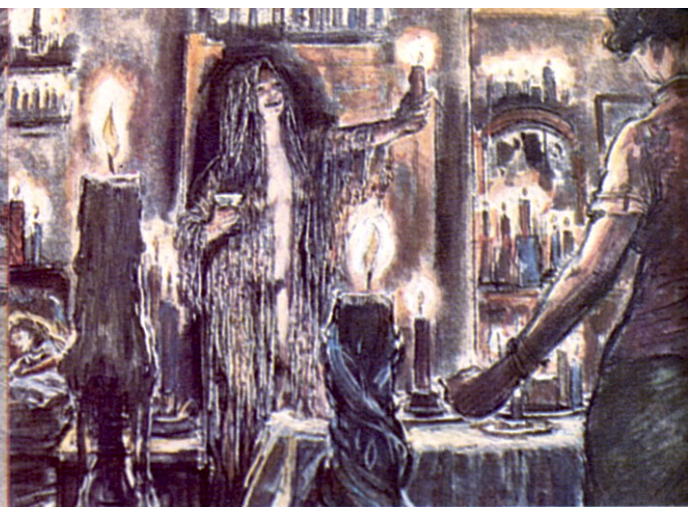
Cover: Director Richard Donner painted by artist Roger Stine.

Christopher Reeve dons his red cape as the man of steel in SUPERMAN: Background

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# NUMBER 4





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George Pal's concept paintings of *THE DISAPPEARANCE*, his forthcoming film based on the novel by Philip Wylie. 1) Coitus Interruptus takes on a new meaning when all women disappear from the world of men, and vice versa. The X-rated nature of the Wylie novel is a strong departure for a Pal production.

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2) In the world of men, the Russians find no way of preserving their totalitarian system except by starting WWII. 3) In the world of women, pilotless planes crash the world over and women lack the skill and training to cope with such disasters. 4) Paula comes home after an exhausting day trying to organize a plan for survival, only to find her daughter holding a memorial service for all the "dead men" no longer a part of her life. 5) Paula visits a suicide club for women. 6) In the world of men,

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It doesn't seem like a real science fiction film boom without a George Pal Production playing at your neighborhood theatre. And Pal, still an active producer in Hollywood, intends to remedy the situation and take advantage of the current high interest in science fiction to bring a pet project to the screen, Philip Wylie's *The Disappearance* (Warner Books, \$2.25). Pal first became interested in the property when he met Wylie during the filming of *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* in 1950. Wylie had written the original novel on which that film was based with astronomer Edwin Balmer, and had just finished writing *The Disappearance* which would not be published until the following year. "THE DISAPPEARANCE," explains Pal, "is about a time when all the men suddenly disappear from the women's lives and all the women disappear from the men's lives. It tells the story of what men do without women and at a good cliffhanger point, we flip the screen over, like you show the other side of a coin, and we tell what the women do without men."

Pal took an option on *The Disappearance* shortly after its publication in 1951, and attempted to sell Paramount on the idea of filming it. The studio was then being run by Y. Frank Freeman, a deeply religious man, who was offended by



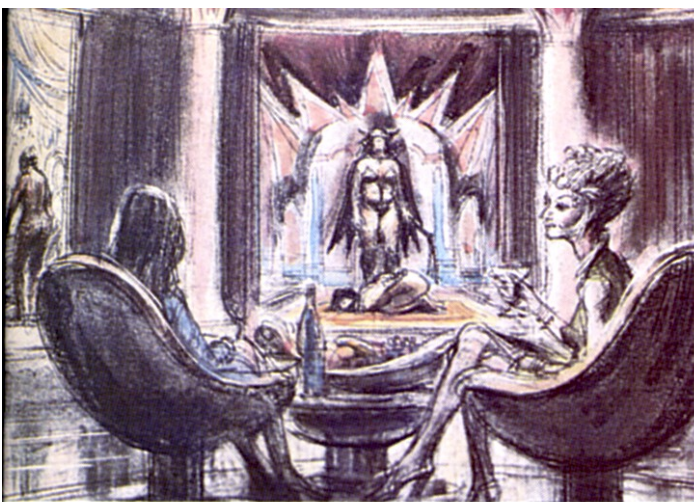
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# GEORGE PAL'S

# THE DISAPPEARANCE

Paintings ©1979 by George Pal Productions

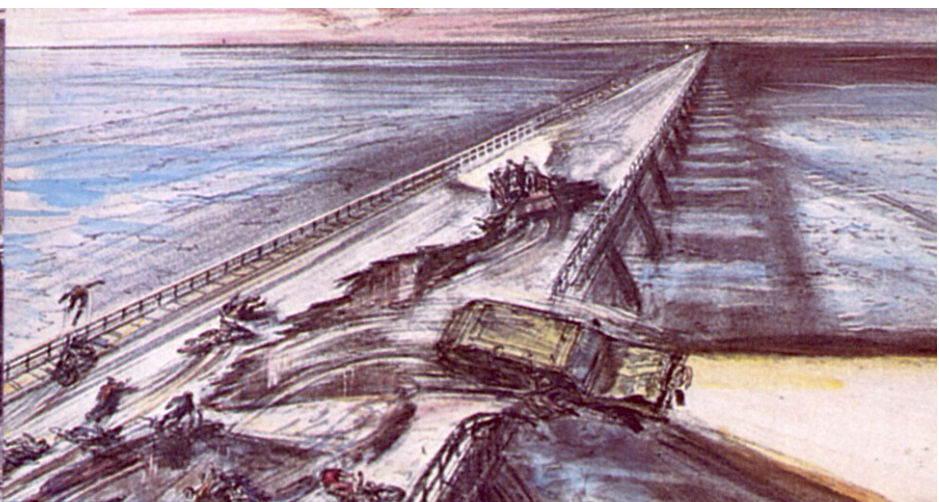




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the book's frankly sexual nature and its profound questioning of the Judeo-Christian ethic. Freeman flatly refused to consider the property and Pal's option ran out. At the time, *The Disappearance* was simply too hot for Hollywood. That Pal chose to champion such a controversial property, the prophetic forerunner of Women's Lib, shows that the producer's courage and vision wasn't limited to popularizing the cause of space travel. Pal always regretted letting his option on the property expire, and watched nervously as other producers, King Vidor among them, attempted to develop *The Disappearance* during the fifties. After Pal left Paramount as a line producer in 1955 and transferred to MGM as an affiliated independent in 1958, he discovered the property was available again and bought it. MGM acquired the rights from Pal in a joint development deal in 1965, and *THE DISAPPEARANCE* was announced as a forthcoming release. But the project was plagued by changing, indecisive managements at the studio which passed on the first screenplay by David Harmon and then turned down a later treatment by Michael Kanin. In frustration, Pal bought back the rights from MGM and announced *THE DISAPPEARANCE* as part of a four picture deal with Cinema Center Films in 1968. But

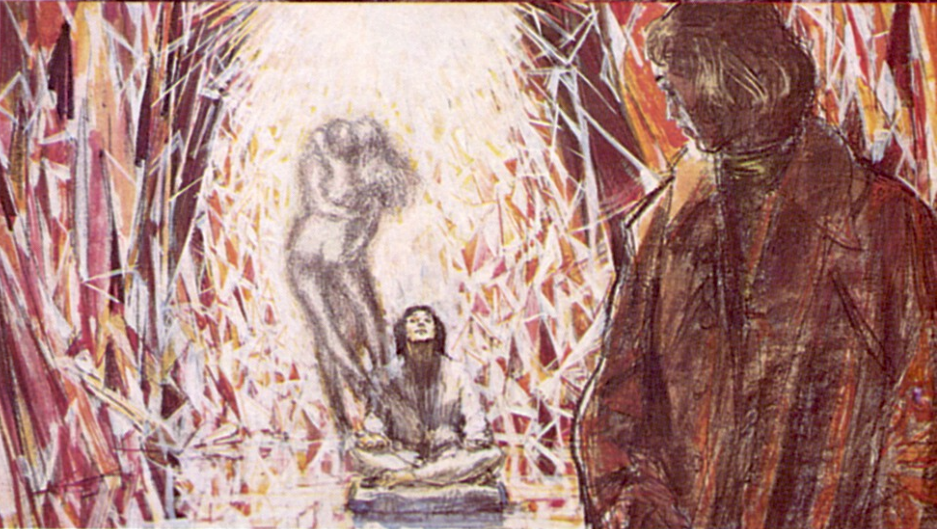
*anarchy rules. Bill, Paula's husband, flees with friends in a truck from roving packs of men who have gone on a rampage directed against members of the establishment. This unique chase sequence will be filmed across the isolated highways spanning the ocean between Florida and the Key islands. 7) Women relieve their sexual frustrations in night spots which feature erotic floor shows, lesbianism, and life-size, fully detailed love dolls, often modeled after well-known male celebrities. 8) Bill's friend Elliot is an engineer who builds his house into the form of a huge mandala—the Bhuddist symbol of universality—of which he becomes a part. Following the spiritual teachings and discipline of Zen, concentration allows him to bridge the gap between the two worlds, and reach his wife on a new astral plane.*



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## PRODUCTION

# DISAPPEARANCE



"I feel THE DISAPPEARANCE will be a ground-breaking, controversial motion picture," says George Pal, the dean of fantasy and science fiction filmmakers. For a producer who in the past hardly tackled anything stronger than stories by The Brothers Grimm, the X-rated material of Philip Wylie's speculative fiction will be a bold departure.

the company, a feature film production arm of the CBS Television Network, was short-lived, and a new script by Franklin Cohen never began production. Pal has tenaciously held onto the property ever since, announcing it periodically in 1971 and again in 1977 as one of several forthcoming productions under his independent banner.

Pal obviously has a great affection for the project, having stuck with it for almost thirty years, and talks animatedly about its filmic possibilities. "Elliot's a very square engineer, a mature man who's not willing to accept 'The Disappearance' and the loss of his young wife. He's going to do something about it. Normally, this fellow is always neatly dressed in Brooks suits and he wears ties all the time. But now he lets himself go. His garden is gone. He doesn't take care of the outside of his house. And he doesn't see anybody. When people come to see him, he opens the door and asks angrily, 'What do you want.' His friends are startled to see that he has grown a beard, his hair is long, and he's filthy and dirty. Day and night you hear hammering and sawing in the house. It's kind of a red herring. What the hell's he doing, hammering and all? Finally, toward the end of the picture, he comes to his best friend, who had given up on his sanity, wearing a white Mao suit with an Indian cap, sandals on his feet, his beard gone, his hair cut moderately. 'It's ready, Bill,' he says. 'Come on.' What! And he takes Bill back to his house and shows him what he did. He has built a huge *mandala*, a structure which is the symbol of universality based on the mystic beliefs and principals of Bhuddism. Being an engineer, he was able to convert his living room into a revolving stage with no corners. Behind it are psychedelic lights and sitar music and voices in stereophonic sound. In the very center is a pillow. He sits on the pillow in lotus fashion, and concentrates, and he is able to get in touch with his wife. Then he begins these weird movements as his friend Bill watches. He, in fact, makes love to his wife." It hardly sounds like George Pal talking, the man responsible for WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE TIME MACHINE, not to mention TOM THUMB, until he adds, "Of course there will be lots of special effects. It's really amazing what you can do with effects."

George Pal is currently preparing THE DISAPPEARANCE for filming. Although the project has been planned for several years, it has never been so close to fruition.

Article by Peter S. Perakos and Frederick S. Clarke. George Pal interviewed by Peter S. Perakos, Frederick S. Clarke and Dennis S. Johnson. George Pal photographed by Dennis S. Johnson. Preproduction paintings photographed by Jordan R. Fox, 1979 by George Pal Productions, Inc.

Notably, THE DISAPPEARANCE will be in the vein of social science fiction, as opposed to the currently popular space opera characterized by the subordination of the human element to the fantastic. In contrast, THE DISAPPEARANCE will concentrate in depicting fully dimensional characters caught in a unique situation. "I don't consider THE DISAPPEARANCE to be 'science fiction,'" Pal remarks, "I regard it instead as a meaningful 'what if' story, with a great deal of the element of wonder."

The timely and prophetic thesis of *The Disappearance* is that the primary cause of discord in the world is rooted in the schism of the sexes, a separation based in fundamental errors in the ruling tenets of Western Civilization. The problem is brought to light through the means of "Divine Intervention," a cosmic event which creates two parallel worlds. The men inhabit one world and in the other, only women exist. Thus, both sexes are unaware of their mutual plight.

The initial repercussions of "The Disappearance" are immediate and devastating, especially in the world of women: untended refineries and nuclear power plants erupt in cataclysmic explosions; fires devastate cities. The women are barely able to cope with the crises, the majority lacking the sophisticated skills needed in the fields of industry and perhaps the most important, communication. The lack of telephone, television, and radio effectively isolates cities—and nations. While the women try to cope with impending anarchy, the men face a different form of chaos: the mutual distrust between the superpowers results in a devastating world war.

Clearly, THE DISAPPEARANCE will continue the George Pal tradition of spectacular special effects including the destruction of the major powers' capitol cities (Painting 2) in the men's world, while plane crashes and fires devastate the world of the women (Painting 3). Of course, Pal realizes that while visual effects are an important asset to the success of the film, they cannot supplant the drama implicit in "The Disappearance." For it is through the eyes of the characters that the audience perceives the tragedy.

The principal figure in the men's world is William Grant, while his wife Paula is the protagonist in the women's world. Prior to "The Disappearance," their relationship was suffused with tension, partly due to Paula's sacrificing her own potentially brilliant career to marry Grant, a Nobel laureate. Paula has reached a point in her life where doubts, even regret about her past decision are plaguing her. The event of "The Disappearance," albeit a terrible one, nevertheless provides Paula an opportunity to prove herself and find inner strength. Similarly, Grant learns to cope, but ultimately he realizes how much of his own ability is due to Paula.

"William Grant," Pal remarks, "will be a similar kind of hero to William Gaunt of Philip Wylie's book. He is certainly an introspective, thinking man, but at the same time, if necessary, a man of action. The part is a 'juicy' one for a mature star, if we decide to take the name cast route. Paula is definitely a remarkably strong personality, a driving force, and as in the novel, her identity is formed in the midst of the catastrophe. This role is a much desired one, judging from the many inquiries I have

received from prominent stars. I remember how moved I was by Paula's letter to her husband in the event of her death, and we are keeping that touching scene, of Grant's discovery of the letter, intact in the film."

The story presents many striking and controversial concepts, which are even more impressive when one realizes that the Wylie book was written 28 years ago. He comments on the segregation of the sexes; how women are frequently reduced to the status of objects by a materialistic culture which also depersonalizes men; how science has become more of a testament to human vanity than integrity, proceeding with little or no regard to its inherent social impact; and that the morality advocated by Christianity is repressive and destructive to the individual. Pal finds both strengths and weaknesses in Wylie's various arguments.

"I feel that THE DISAPPEARANCE will be a controversial and ground-breaking film," says Pal, "through the presentation of its premise—competition between the sexes brings alienation, even hate, in its wake—without showing the 'sterility of the American culture,' if such a thing exists at all. I especially refuse to show *only* our country's failings—if any—and not her great merits. We will not say that Christianity in its present form is repressive or destructive, because I do not agree. During the making of WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, I had the good fortune to meet with Mr. Wylie and discuss THE DISAPPEARANCE. We came to the conclusion that a motion picture based on the novel should emphasize the need of each sex for the other—for a man and a woman are but half a unit, and the love of a man and a woman makes the whole."

Since Wylie's book is some 400 pages, Pal won't be able to film it all. "We had to select its best and condense the material," explains Pal. "This practice, however, does not exclude the possibility of delving deeper into the concepts, within the limits of an approximately two-hour long motion picture. These changes are within the framework and spirit of Wylie's writing, we think. Edwinna's farewell service, for instance, will be one of the memorable scenes of the picture because it paints a descriptive picture of the character [Painting 4]. The terrorism and lawlessness of the mob against the 'eggheads' is directed against the main characters in the film instead of just presenting a general picture of the chaos [Painting 6]. But you will still feel that the rage is also directed against authorities and government as well. Paula's visit to the Suicide Club [Painting 5]—also an added scene—would, I'm sure, please Mr. Wylie if he were alive. The love doll idea [Painting 7] was a prophecy of his that has become a reality today. And we are going even further, to embellish the dolls with the characteristics of recognizable personalities."

For a producer who in the past hardly tackled anything stronger than stories by the Brothers Grimm, the X-rated material of Philip Wylie's speculative fiction will be a bold departure. But George Pal is both highly optimistic and enthusiastic about the project. Say Pal: "I sincerely believe that THE DISAPPEARANCE will be one of the best, if not *the best* picture, I have ever had the good fortune to be associated with." □









# TIMEGATE

**Bold explorers, lost in time,  
face the terrors of a prehistoric world!**



# Whatever happened to Jim Danforth's TIMEGATE?

There is a nondescript storefront on Irving Avenue in Glendale. Uncollected mail is piled-up inside the locked front door. Posted notices show the phones and power have been cut-off. An office secretary working next door says that the building is being rented by a movie company. "They were doing something animated," she reveals. Though no one has worked there for months, the rent is still being paid. The building had served for over a year as the preproduction headquarters and special effects facility for Jim Danforth's TIMEGATE, until work on the picture was cancelled last November.

TIMEGATE was a script written by Jim Danforth, just after his work on Universal's planned remake of KING KONG was aborted in 1976. Danforth developed the script from ideas he had discussed with Universal effectsman Bill Taylor, about a story involving futuristic big-game hunters who go back in time to hunt the dinosaurs. Danforth conceived of a future in which time travel was commonplace enough to be used for amusement by the general public. The Chronex Corporation packages time tours for vacation travelers, and had set-up a relatively harmless game preserve in the Cretaceous period, roughly 70 million years in the past, in which only docile creatures and simple herbivores were allowed to roam. The action follows a tour group, imperiled when predators break into the Chronex preserve and destroy the time beacon, which prevents the party from returning back to the future, forcing them to leave the preserve and travel across the prehistoric wilds to a government research station for rescue.

TIMEGATE was Jim Danforth's ticket to direct. One of the best ways to get into directing is to write your own script. If your property is desirable enough, you'll find a backer willing to take you as a director just to get it. Danforth presented TIMEGATE to prospective backers as a package: his story, his special effects, and his vision as director to make it work. Producer Steve Barkett was working with Danforth to raise money for the film, a low-budget affair that would have some truly remarkable special effects as its main drawing card. Barkett had worked with Danforth previously in trying to put together a

KING KONG remake before the big money, like DeLaurentiis and Universal, had moved-in to take control of the property.

Barkett had found some interest in funding TIMEGATE at Dimension Pictures, for just under \$500,000. Danforth had tailored the script for the low-budget action film market. There were no scenes set in the future, something that would have been expensive to realize in production. The script opened right in the prehistoric past with a whopping effects sequence. A *struthiomimus*, a small, bird-like dinosaur, squats on a desert waste, busily unearthing, peeling and eating dinosaur eggs that had been incubating in the sand. With a thunderous crack, it is startled from its preoccupation to look up and see the "Timegate" open before it in the distance. Out of this hole in space strides a mechanical walking machine, bearing the Chronex expedition and its supplies. Then the time-warp thunders shut again as abruptly as it had appeared.

Dimension Pictures saw the potential in the script and Danforth's effects, but wanted to bring in another director to make the picture. Jack Arnold was considered briefly, then Dimension brought in a candidate of their own, John Broderick. Broderick had just finished his first film as director, BAD GEORGIA ROAD, a low-budget exploitationer he also produced, starring Gary Lockwood and Carol Lynley, which Dimension had picked up for release. Broderick was young, but had come up through ranks as a production manager for Roger Corman. The TIMEGATE deal at Dimension fell through eventually, for various reasons, but Broderick got to know Danforth during the discussions, and became interested in the property himself, as a producer. When subsequent efforts by Barkett and Danforth to raise money for the film had failed, Danforth turned the property over to Broderick, on a six-month option, for free, as a last-ditch effort to see if the financing for it could be found.

At the time, Danforth was all but contracted to supervise the special effects for, and direct, Milton Subotsky's THONGOR IN THE VALLEY OF THE DEMONS [see 6:3:28, 5:2:38, 4:3:46], and his agreement with Broderick left him free to take on other work, in case the financing jelled on THONGOR in the meantime. Just three days after reaching the agreement to turn TIMEGATE over to Broderick for financing, Danforth received an offer from Subotsky to make TIMEGATE as well as THONGOR! Subotsky and his American partner,

Sidney Kaufman, had formed a three-way partnership with Melvin Simon, a shopping center promoter who was plowing millions of dollars into independent film production in a big way. The partnership, called Grand Prize Productions, would produce three pictures for Simon, the chief bankroller, who would then sell-off the distribution rights worldwide. Subotsky would supply the properties for filming, which included DOMINIQUE [see 6:4:52] and THONGOR. Subotsky wanted to bring TIMEGATE into the deal, as a sort of low-budget trial run for the similar but much bigger production he planned to mount for THONGOR. Danforth referred Subotsky to Broderick, and a deal was made for Subotsky to acquire the property, with Danforth to direct his own script and supervise the special effects, and Broderick to serve as line producer. Preproduction would begin immediately on TIMEGATE in Hollywood, and on DOMINIQUE in London, while Subotsky and Danforth continued to prepare THONGOR.

Says Danforth, "Since I would be involved all day prepping TIMEGATE, Milton talked of sending over art director John Blezard to work with me during the evenings on the THONGOR storyboards. That might have become a little hairy, but I was willing." That never happened, however, and Danforth began to hear less and less about THONGOR as the work on TIMEGATE proceeded. One day, during a production meeting on TIMEGATE, Danforth overheard Subotsky during a telephone conversation talking to someone about *having* a director and *doing* the preliminary effects work on THONGOR. That, according to Danforth, is how he discovered he was no longer involved on the project.

"I was disappointed to lose THONGOR," says Danforth, "but I resolved to put that aside, and get on with the business of making TIMEGATE." With Broderick, Danforth set-up the preproduction facility on Irving Street in July of '77, and began to prepare for the start of live-action photography, TIMEGATE was to be done non-union to get the most out of every production dollar. Broderick declared a ban on all publicity so as not to attract undue attention to the film. The unions can make it very difficult for any independent production without a union seal, if they want to. Because of the low-profile Broderick kept on the picture, most of the industry never even knew of the existence of TIMEGATE.

Danforth's script called for the appearance of eleven species of

dinosaur, and a total of 175 different animation cuts, a staggering amount of work which would have exceeded by far the quantity of animation he provided for WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH (9 minutes and 50 seconds worth), approaching Ray Harryhausen's animation record of 18 minutes in THE VALLEY OF GWANGI, the most ever in any feature film. "I wouldn't like to set TIMEGATE above GWANGI in terms of the volume of work," emphasizes Danforth. "I've always been impressed by the incredible amount of work Ray got out on GWANGI."

Much of the TIMEGATE animation involved quick cuts of various dinosaurs encountered routinely by the expedition, used to establish a mood of being firmly rooted in a prehistoric age. Danforth wanted to avoid using dinosaurs only as rampaging monsters, showing them in an authentic ecological setting, acting like real animals, grazing, galloping along, herding together. A *monoclonius* would act just as normally as a contemporary rhinoceros, an *ornithomimus* would be as graceful as a gazelle. This low-key approach to some of the animation was designed to contrast and complement the excitement of roaring action sequences, so that the appearance of an animated model wouldn't automatically telegraph to the audience what was about to happen, allowing for some element of surprise and suspense. The animation would also be spread more evenly throughout the film. The amount of animation required, projected to be almost *fifteen minutes*, would be more than Danforth could ever hope to accomplish working alone in the twelve months budgeted for postproduction. To shoulder half the load, Danforth hired animator Doug Beswick, who had just completed work on the extensive stop-motion sequences of PLANET OF DINOSAURS.

Beswick joined the production in November 1977, and began by building armature parts and modifying some of Danforth's existing armatures. The Irving Street studio was already in full swing. Phil Tippet and Bill Hedge were fabricating the full-size "wolf-lizards," and Ken Ralston and Nick Seldon were constructing props. Ralston was building a rocket pack and flying suit used by a futuristic rescue team at the end of the picture. Dennis Muren was lined-up to film the "rocket man" using the technique developed by effectsmen Howard and Theodore Lydecker for the flying scenes in all those Republic serials of yore. Muren was also on tap to do other miniature and high-

*Jim Danforth's poster art, painted to help sell the concept of the film to financial backers. Danforth later reworked the idea for the walking machine to include eight crab-like legs.*

by Frederick S. Clarke



speed photography, but bowed-out of the picture due to other commitments when production stalled. Delays also caused the loss of armature-maker Jon Berg. Some armatures for the film were built by Tom St. Amand, who at the time was doing carpentry work for the production, building frames for the mattes and glass paintings. The remaining armature work was farmed-out to a machine shop. Tom Scherman was building a miniature cliffside out of tinfoil, dubbed Mt. McKrinkly, to match the geography of Red Rock Canyon, where some of the live-action would be filmed, for use in an avalanche sequence to be filmed blue screen. And Randy Cook was at work, briefly, on effects storyboards, before leaving the production to join David Allen on *THE PRIMEVALS*.

One of Danforth's most intriguing concepts in the screenplay called for an eight-legged crab-like walking machine, used by the expedition to traverse any kind of rugged terrain. A full scale mock-up was built for filming close-ups of the actors and the action taking place on its open deck. These would be carefully matched to scenes filmed with a miniature machine, animated with stop-motion puppets of the principal actors onboard, to be used in full shots and in scenes where there was a close interaction between animated dinosaurs and cast members.

Danforth had storyboarded lots of action for the machine-bound explorers, involving a complexity of elements that his animation work has been noted for. One sequence involved the machine butting heads with a rampaging *stryacosaur*. Danforth had planned 36 different shots of the machine in all, and had budgeted four months of postproduction work to animate them. With eight legs on the machine, and six human figures inside, each with three appendages (a head and two arms) to be animated, not to mention the animation required for the dinosaurs involved, Danforth attempted to script the action and camera angles involving the machine so as to minimize the anima-

tion required, whenever possible. Most of the scenes involving the machine were to take place during the trek from the preserve to the government station, when it would be lashed with supplies and equipment which would obscure the occupants inside. During the avalanche sequence, the riders duck under the seats, and shots were to be taken from low angles as the machine scabbled over the camera, rocks falling on all sides, eliminating the necessity of animating the passengers in at least a third of the set-ups. On the other hand, Danforth had planned to have shots of the machine being turned over, with the passengers falling out, which would have required painstaking aerial brace work. "The walking machine," says Danforth, "was a concept I felt would be so strong on the screen, it justified the extra effort."

Adds Doug Beswick, "The machine was probably the most ambitious animation in the film. There were lots of scenes of it walking over terrain in long shots. It was going to be very difficult to make it look realistic, because the people in it were almost totally exposed in some scenes." Danforth designed the miniatures to be used in the walking machine sequences on a scale of one inch to the foot, so that the figures of the actors, roughly six inches in height, would feature enough detail to film reasonably close on the action without betraying the trick of switching from the real to the animated performers. This called for models of the dinosaurs to be animated with the walking machine to be built *big*. A *stryacosaur*, for instance, was to be thirty inches long, and a *pteranodon* was to feature a correspondingly large wingspan. The armature being used for a *monoclonius* was actually one Danforth had built years before for a *brontosaurus*!

The script featured several other exciting ideas which made *TIMEGATE* much more than just another dinosaur picture. Beswick built a 1" scale model of a hovercraft used by the rescue team at the end of the film, a sort of cross between a plane and a helicopter, with lifting blades enclosed inside the wings. Danforth spent three days with his crew filming it at high speeds out at Lone Pine, at the base of the High Sierras. In one sequence, a pack of "wolf-lizards"

attack the expedition's camp at night. These creatures, small scavengers which hunt their prey in organized groups, were all part of Danforth's ambitious program of animated effects, none of which were even begun. The production never got that far, and was cancelled before any of the animation, even test work, was underway.

While preproduction work was going on, Danforth was grappling with script rewrites demanded by the financial backers. "The people to whom I sold the project," explained Danforth, "saw it as a more elaborate film, and so it grew and grew in complexity, in cost, and in the production time required. Much of this input and the changes in concepts that resulted were genuine improvements. My fifth draft script is a blueprint for a much more entertaining film than was the first draft." The budget for casting the picture shot up from \$140,000 to \$500,000, at the insistence of the producers, with talk of even more money being available, as star names such as Bo Swenson, Ernest Borgnine, Barbara Bach and June Lockhart began to be considered, and the overall budget soared from under \$1,000,000 to \$2,400,000. Although the film seemed to be getting bigger and bigger, Danforth feels that continued changes in the script caused the preproduction work to fall further and further behind schedule, and morale at the studio was plagued by disquieting rumors that the film was about to be cancelled the entire time. "At one point, about four months into the production, I initiated a shutdown myself," revealed Danforth. "It became apparent to me that we were about to commit \$600,000 of financier Mel Simon's money with no chance that the art department would be able to make the start date." The picture was reorganized however, and preparations for the start of principal photography continued for another nine months. Laments Danforth, "We created a warehouse full of esoteric props and futuristic vehicles. We shot thousands of feet of second unit background plates and high-speed miniatures. We built and rebuilt, wrote and rewrote, shot and reshoot as changes in the concept and escalations in the desired quality of the film invalidated previous work."

At the end of August 1978, approximately six weeks prior to the scheduled start of principal photography, and a full year after preproduction began, AIP entered the picture, as a possible distributor and cofinancier of the project. Attached to their money was a list of demands—they wanted more changes! Minor things, like the entire premise of the film! "AIP did not want the characters to go back into time to *hunt* dinosaurs," explained Subotsky, "but to *trap* them for a 21st Century Zoo." Another AIP idea was for the Chronex expedition to hunt dinosaurs for food, to bring back to a starving populace of the future. According to Danforth, AIP didn't like the characters, either; in fact, the entire first half of the script was now considered to be unsatisfactory! Says Subotsky, "I told AIP that the changes they demanded were out of the question. They would have destroyed

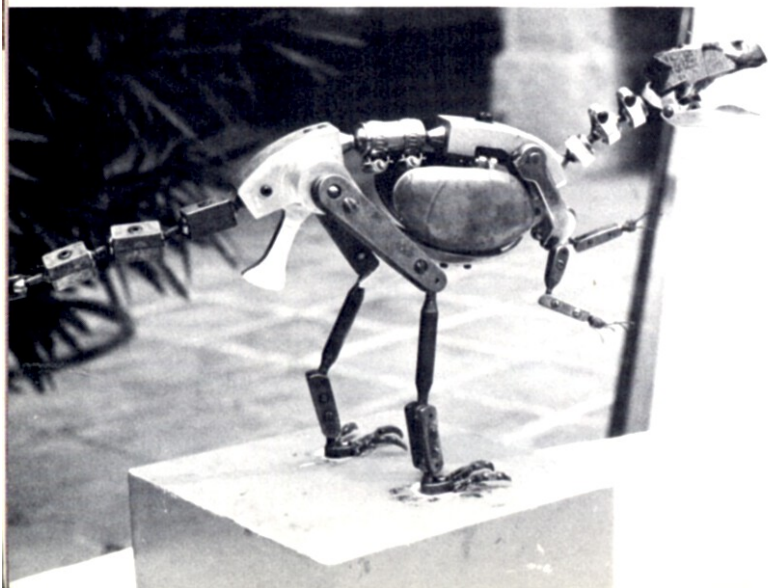
the picture!" Nevertheless, it was decided over Subotsky's objections to try and rewrite the script to meet AIP's demands, keeping any changes to a minimum and leaving the planned effects sequences and huge preproduction investment in props untouched, so as to meet the early October start date. The matter came to a head in a production meeting between Danforth, producer John Broderick, Robert Relyea, Melvin Simon's head of production, and Jere Henshaw of AIP.

Explains Danforth, "After five drafts of the script, I did not have enough energy or perspective left to be involved with a major rewrite and still complete the other work which I had to do prior to our shoot date. At the time I was under strict instructions from the line producer, John Broderick, that I must start shooting the first week in October or the film would be cancelled. I stated that I did not feel the requested changes were in the best interests of the film, but that as owners of the film they [Grand Prize Productions] certainly had the right to make changes if they wished. I carefully explained that I would still honor my commitment to direct the film and to execute the visual effects, if another writer could be found to make whatever changes AIP required." Danforth was asked for a letter stating that he would still do the effects work, and was told that the matter would be taken up with Melvin Simon, and that he would be kept informed of any decision.

"Less than four hours later," continues Danforth, "John Broderick, with authorization from Milton Subotsky via long distance telephone, had me locked out of my own visual effects studio on the grounds that I might steal the models needed for the film! The irony is that a few weeks earlier there had been a burglary at the studio in which most of the models were stolen, including many from my personal collection. When I confronted Subotsky with this fact, he told me that he had not even been informed of the robbery. Nevertheless, a guard was placed on duty at the studio during the days that followed. The guard's written instructions to call the police if I attempted to enter were seen by several of the craftsmen working there. I took the position that I couldn't continue work on the film in an atmosphere of such mistrust and hostility." Danforth submitted his resignation from the film in writing to Melvin Simon.

Says Subotsky, in justification of the lock-out, "John Broderick, whose judgement I have every reason to trust, told me that Danforth was in such a state that he might very well remove from the studio things that belonged to the picture. I could not risk the possibility of any props or armatures being taken by an angry Danforth." Broderick, however, says that the lock-out was a misunderstanding caused by the security company that supplied the guard, and that he never gave any instructions to bar Danforth from the Irving Street facility or to call the police if he showed up. Says Broderick, "The orders were that nothing was to be taken out or brought into the warehouse with-

Danforth's *tyrannosaurus armature*, 14" tall with breathing mechanism, built for, but never used in, *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*, became a *trachydont* in *TIMEGATE*.







Jim Danforth

**"John Broderick, with authorization from Milton Subotsky, had me locked out of my own visual effects studio on the grounds that I might steal the models needed for the film! A guard was placed at the studio, with written instructions to call the police if I attempted to enter. I took the position that I couldn't continue work on the film in an atmosphere of such mistrust and hostility."**

**Jim Danforth, Director**

**"In my opinion, Jim Danforth psychologically was unable to face the main shooting with live actors. He found reasons to do all sorts of things on the film except the one thing he should have done: the storyboards. For the most part, he selected his own personnel, then almost invariably re-did the work himself. To put it simply, if Danforth had done the storyboards, TIMEGATE would have been made."**

**Milton Subotsky, Producer**



Milton Subotsky

out my specific instruction." As soon as Broderick was informed by the art director at the studio of the guard's erroneous written instruction to bar Danforth from the premises, he called the company and the guard to correct the error.

By then, however, the whole debacle had come to the attention of Melvin Simon, who called a meeting with both Danforth and Broderick to evaluate the situation. Accounts of this meeting vary, but both Danforth and Broderick say they were prepared to finish the picture. Apparently, Melvin Simon was not. At the end of the week a decision had been reached: Simon pulled the plug on TIMEGATE. Melvin Simon and representatives of Melvin Simon Productions have repeatedly declined to comment on their involvement in the film.

Effects technician Doug Beswick could only speculate on what was behind the cancellation. As part of the crew, he was left ignorant about the politics involved. "It takes more than a personality conflict to shut down what could have been a multi-million dollar film," says Beswick. "It seems to me that two people could just say, 'Let's stay cool and get this movie done.' Because Broderick and Danforth both lost out. They had a year of their lives tied up in it and lots of money. There's got to be more to it than just that."

Subotsky calls Danforth's explanations for the production delays, postponements and eventual cancellation of TIMEGATE "rationalizations." Elaborates Subotsky, "The film had to be shot in a location which was covered with snow from December to late Spring and in which temperatures reached 140° in mid-Summer. Consequently, main shooting had to be started in either September or October, or in April or May. Before the main shooting could be done, Jim Danforth had to prepare storyboards. The main shooting was scheduled for September 1977. Danforth had not done the storyboards. Shooting was postponed to April 1978. Danforth had not done the storyboards. Shooting was postponed to October 1978. Danforth did not do the storyboards, and resigned from the film. The big question, then, is why, in all this time, did Danforth not do the storyboards? In my opinion, he was psychologically

unable to face the main shooting with live actors. He, therefore, found reasons to do all sorts of things on the picture except the one thing he should have done: the storyboards. For the most part, Danforth selected his own personnel, then almost invariably re-did their work himself. John Broderick told me their work was more than satisfactory. Why, then, did Danforth re-do it? In my opinion, it was to give himself reasons for not having time to do the storyboards, so that he would not have to face working with live actors. I don't think Jim knows this himself, it is in his subconscious. But to put it most simply, if Jim Danforth had done the storyboards, TIMEGATE would have been made."

Broderick and Subotsky tried to salvage the project by offering animator David Allen the opportunity to step in and take over the reigns from Danforth. The offer was tentative, conditional on their ability to raise the money required to finish the film. Allen declined, ultimately for personal reasons, owing to his respect for and long association with Danforth in the effects business. The decision was a moot one, however. Broderick and Subotsky couldn't raise the money. The Simon organization had apparently been the prime mover behind the film, and when they packed-up their money and went home, that was that. Key production people were kept on the payroll for the next few weeks, in the hope that money for the film could yet be found, but by the end of October the last production people were let go. TIMEGATE was dead.

Subotsky and Broderick still believed in the film, however. Subotsky put up the money to continue paying the rent on the Irving Street preproduction facility while he and Broderick tried to refinance the production. The props and equipment needed to finish the film still stood at the ready, behind locked doors. Thousands of dollars of that equipment was actually the property of Jim Danforth. "Subotsky and Broderick just confiscated it," says Danforth, "apparently in an attempt to get me to sign a release so that they could make the film without my involvement. I took the position that if they wanted to make TIMEGATE without me, they were probably entitled to do

so, but that I would not authorize their efforts by signing a release." Subotsky explains that Danforth misunderstood the purpose of the release requested: "The Simon organization wanted a release from Danforth before returning his equipment, a great deal of which had been improved at the picture's expense."

In continued negotiations with the Melvin Simon organization, Subotsky made an arrangement that offered some hope for the project. "If I could find half the financing needed to complete the film," said Subotsky, explaining the deal, "Simon would provide the other half. After many months and several trips to the United States, I succeeded in securing the pledge of a major company to provide the funding required as an advance on foreign distribution, but by that time, the Simon organization was no longer interested in the film and refused to put up their half of the money." Had the Simon organization not pulled out a second time, Subotsky would have completed the picture with Broderick acting as director and Doug Beswick providing special effects. Beswick was surprised to hear about it when we told him! "John Broderick was talking to quite a few persons about doing the effects after the film collapsed, and I was one of them," said Beswick, genuinely flattered to learn for the first time that if the money had been found, he would have been offered the film. "The discussions were never definite. There was never anything in writing." According to Beswick, the last he heard from Broderick, the situation was "hopeless."

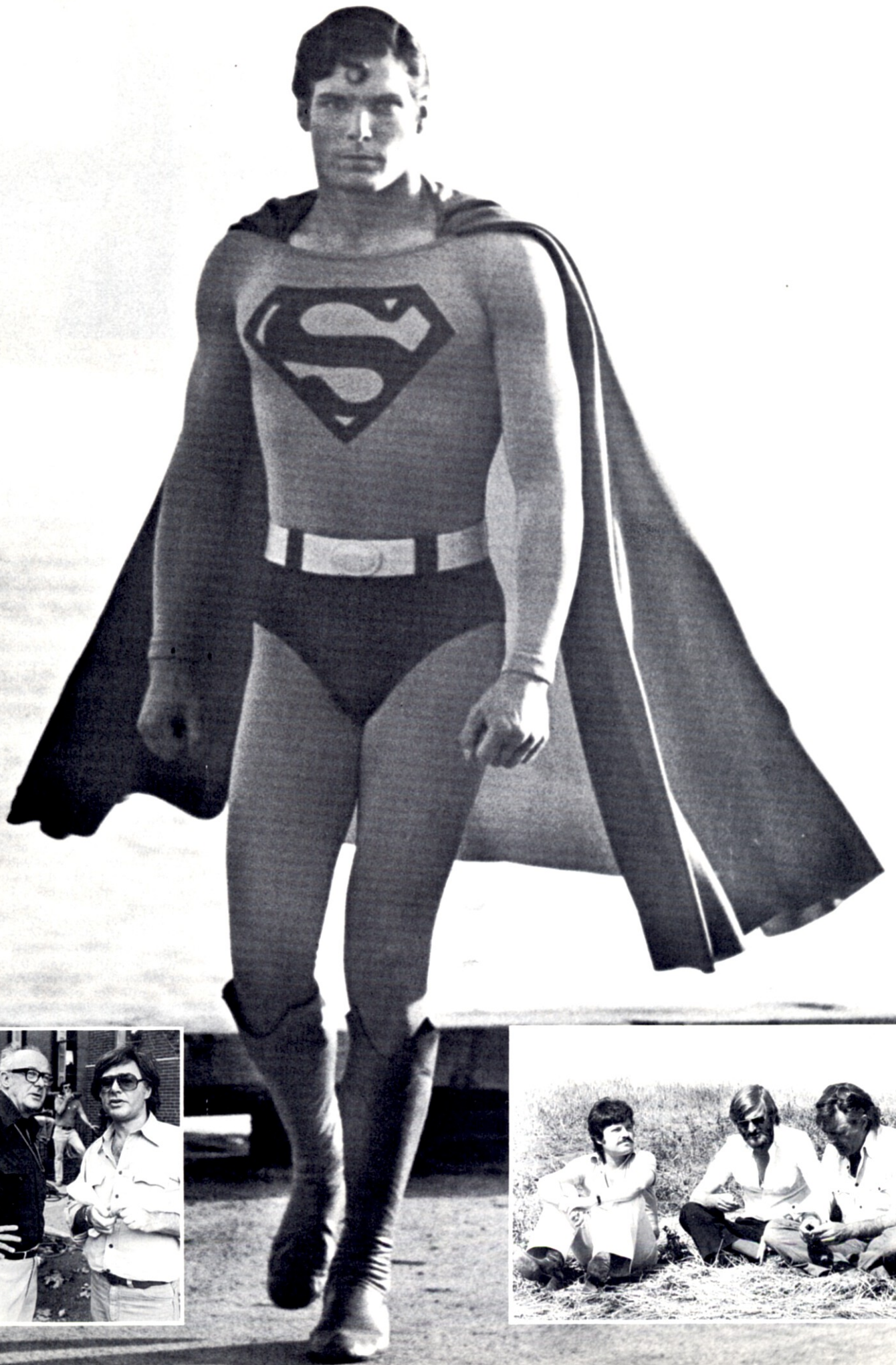
An unknown factor in the demise of TIMEGATE is a rumored dissatisfaction in the Melvin Simon organization with Subotsky's production of DOMINIQUE, the only part of the original three-picture Grand Prize Productions deal that actually got made. Although finished more than a year ago, the film has yet to be released in this country, although it has been sold for distribution to American Cinema Releasing. Says Subotsky, "DOMINIQUE had absolutely nothing to do with the collapse of TIMEGATE. Melvin Simon loved DOMINIQUE, and every audience preview so far has been sensational." Subotsky won't discuss the fate of THONGOR, the third part of Grand Prize

Productions' three-picture deal involving the Simon organization. "Financing a film is a touchy business," explains Subotsky, "and any little thing can upset it. In the past year I completed the screenplay and will probably have financing from a major company within the next month [June]." One fact appears certain, that financing won't be forthcoming from Melvin Simon Productions.

It has been more than seven months since the demise of TIMEGATE, and the efforts of Broderick and Subotsky to revive it have come to naught. The Melvin Simon organization, if not wishing to carry-on with the property, are still very much interested in recovering their investment, estimated by those connected with the film to be as much as \$650,000. At the end of April, Jim Danforth made arrangements with Melvin Simon Productions which permit him to seek the funding needed to finish TIMEGATE on his own. Milton Subotsky is quick to point out that "TIMEGATE does not belong to Melvin Simon Productions. It belongs to Grand Prize Productions, and nothing can be done with it until Grand Prize is dissolved." When that happens, Subotsky feels, contractually, the TIMEGATE script belongs to him, and he intends to produce it as a follow-up to THONGOR. But the Melvin Simon organization, per Danforth, feels that if Danforth is able to raise the money needed to finish the film, an agreement with the other Grand Prize partners can be reached.

Danforth has picked up the rent payments on the Irving Street studio and has recovered his confiscated equipment. In May, he assembled a five-minute video cassette trailer on TIMEGATE, made up of second unit footage shot of the miniatures and props for special effects work, including stunt footage of a customized Suzuki trail bike and pictures of props and Randy Cook's effects storyboards, plus an animation cut of a *tyrannosaurus* neck and head, built specially for the trailer. "This promo reel will knock your socks off," says Danforth, who hopes to use it to attract backers for the film. "I am going to make every effort to see that TIMEGATE gets made, but if it doesn't, I will at least have had the satisfaction of having been able to try." □









# Richard Donner

# on SUPERMAN

## The director of steel bends producers in his bare hands.

After five years of concerted effort and investor arm-twisting by producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind, the long-awaited film version of SUPERMAN burst onto the screen last December. Fortunately for the producers, its boxoffice legs survived the post-Christmas slump and proceeds on the multi-million dollar film have long since soared into nine-digit figures. Much of SUPERMAN's success must be laid at the feet of its director, Richard Donner, a long-time television veteran whose phenomenally successful thriller, *THE OMEN*, prompted his hiring by the Salkinds. Donner was called in to do the ill-prepared SUPERMAN on short notice when the previously signed director, Guy Hamilton, backed out. With only eleven weeks to prepare, Donner supervised an entire rewrite on the script, hired a new art director, scouted locations, and selected an actor to play the lead role. Two years later, last-minute changes were still being made as the world premiere loomed heavy on the horizon. The following interview took place in Donner's home in January, as the director endeavored to recuperate from the exhausting ordeal.

*Two years ago, you had just completed THE OMEN and were working on a proposal for a sequel. Then, about two weeks later, it was announced that you'd been signed to direct SUPERMAN. How did that come about?*

I got a call one day from a European voice that said, "This is Alexander Salkind. You know whom I am?" And I said, "No." And he said, "I produced *THE THREE MUSKETEERS*. We're doing SUPERMAN now, and we've just seen *THE OMEN*—would you like to do it?" So I said, "That's flattering, but I'd like to read it first." And his reaction was, "You don't have to read it. Everybody likes it." But I said, "Well, I'd feel better if I'd read it." He was calling from Europe, but there was a copy of the script over here which they had sent over—

and twenty minutes later I was reading it. I mean, literally, that's how fast it was here. I called him back later and said that I would be interested if I could do a major rewrite and bring in a new writer. But they said they were very happy with the screenplay, and everybody liked it; so I said, "We had better just forget about it." Meanwhile, though, they were negotiating with my agent, and my agent called and said, "Boy, have I got you a deal." I told him I didn't want it. Anyway, it went on, hassling back and forth, and finally they agreed. So I flew over to Paris and made the deal.

I went to work on the picture the first week in January 1977—and eleven weeks later we were shooting with Brando. They had prepared the picture for a year, but not one bit of it was useful to me. I brought in a new writer, Tom Mankiewicz, and a new art director, John Barry, and we started from scratch.

*What were your basic objections to the original script?*

It was a well-written script, quite honestly. But it was a *ridiculous* script. For one thing, here was this producer, a guy named Pierre Spengler, who was going to supervise making this film for the Salkinds, and he had a 550-page screenplay. Well, number one, I said, "You can't shoot this screenplay, because you'll be shooting for five years." And he said, "Oh, no. It's fine." I said, "That's totally asinine," but that was literally a shooting script and they planned to shoot all 550 pages. You know,

*Left: Christopher Reeve as Superman, the only actor for the film to be cast by director Richard Donner. Left Inset: Cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth and Donner. The film is dedicated to Unsworth, the photographer of 2001, who died after his work on the picture. Inset Right: Producers Ilya Salkind, Pierre Spengler and Donner on location in Canada. Said Donner of the producers, who tried to fire him from the picture, "Monies were just flushed away—totally wasted."*

110 pages is plenty for a script, so even for two features that was way too much.

See, they had gotten a *wonderful* screenplay from Mario Puzo. And they had a director—who was a good director—an Englishman named Guy Hamilton. And then they brought in David and Leslie Newman, and Bob Benton to do rewrites. So you had European producers and an English director making an American fable. And nothing wrong with it, except that I don't think they really knew what the fable was. It's a parody to start with, in an odd sort of way; but they parodied a parody and kept compounding that felony all the way through until it became much like the *BATMAN* television series. I mean, they had things in there like a scene where Superman is looking for Lex Luthor, and he sees a bald head on the street, so he flies down and grabs the guy. Well, the guy turns around and it's Kojak, and he says, "Who d'ya love, baby." Stuff like that.

So when they said I could bring Tom Mankiewicz in, we made an understanding that, obviously, it had to be bigger than life but, at the same time, it had to have some reality within the framework of the people. We tread that line very carefully, and at times we stepped over it. But I loved what we stepped over it with—it gave the comedic relief we needed.

*So they pretty much gave you a free hand to rework the script?*

They questioned some things, and we fought about things; but I always ended up being the winner. The Salkinds were the only ones involved with the quote-unquote creative end. Spengler was just involved with the finance, or the lack thereof.

*Since you only had eleven weeks lead time, was the script pretty much in flux during production, or did you have it set?*

Well, in eleven weeks we shot Brando's Krypton scenes. Then we took a hiatus of three weeks. During that period, we worked on the script, and I went out and

## Interview by Don Shay



"I called the Warner Bros people and I said, 'I'm certainly going to respect the Superman character, but I wish you'd have the DC Comics people ease off a bit.' And from then on in, they were just wonderful. Sent me tons of comic books, which were great for ideas."

scouted locations in the States and Canada and prepared England for the balance. By then, the screenplay was just about finished. There were little things left that I'd call Tom on, or bring him over for—or we'd just improvise it ourselves. Once the relationship developed between Margot Kidder, Christopher Reeve and myself, it became quite easy to improvise within the characterizations.

*Did DC Comics have much control over the script?*

They had total control, contractually. I'll never forget—one time we got a memo from them with a long list of things you couldn't do, all from the screenplay. And they were mostly silly things, quite honestly. I mean, you couldn't say "damn" or "hell"—things like that. How they could have accepted the other screenplay, I don't know, because that would have been the demise of Superman. Sometimes I just don't understand this business.

At that point, however, Warner Brothers had become involved with the picture, because they were picking up the distribution; and Warners owns DC Comics—or at least they're all under the same conglomerate. So I called the Warner Brothers people and said, "I'm certainly going to respect the Superman character, but I wish you'd have the DC Comics people ease off a bit." And from then on in, they were just wonderful—really wonderful. They couldn't do enough for us. Sent me tons of comic books, which were great for ideas. There's some wonderful drawings in them.

*I understand that you and Spengler did not get along at all. Why was that?*

Spengler was the liaison to Alexander Salkind, and he supposedly had this knowledge of production—but my God, I've been in this business long enough to know what a producer is, and it was ridiculous for him to have taken this job. As far as I was concerned, he didn't have any knowledge at all about producing a film like that. If he'd been smart, he'd have just laid back and let

us do it; but instead, he tried to impose himself. So, not only did we end up producing it, in a sense, but we also had to counter-produce what he was doing. It was very difficult.

After THE OMEN, people would say to me, "that's great, you've paid your dues, and now you've made it." And I said, "No. I never paid dues, because I really kind of enjoyed everything I've done getting to where I've gotten." It's all relative. But after this picture—after these two years—I've paid my dues. These two years took everything out of me—everything! It even took the enjoyment out of filmmaking. It was such a trying period.

At the same time, though, I will admit my naivete. Because if I were producer of a film like that, the first thing I would have done was put "X" number of dollars into proving I could make a man fly, and then go from there. Probably the stupidity on Spengler's part made the film possible, because if anybody had tried it for the money I suggested—\$100,000—they would never have made the picture. Nobody knew how to go about it. It was the blind leading the blind, all experimentation. But I was very fortunate. I was surrounded by a terribly talented group of dedicated filmmakers; and somehow or other, we pulled it off.

One of my greatest attributes on the picture was I knew what I wanted. I didn't know how to get it, but I wouldn't accept anything until I saw it. So these poor bastards had to keep trying and trying and trying. In the beginning, everything was departmentalized, and there were little arguments and things like that. But we'd sit in my office at night and go over things; and gradually props was helping special effects, special effects was helping matte painting, matte painting was helping miniature effects, and so on. And soon it became a totally homogenous group.

I must say, I think there are some really amazing feats in that film. And 99% of them, for me, involve the believability of Superman. We were handicapped with the liability of having a man who had to fly. No lights came out of his ass, and there was no noise to dazzle the audiences' senses—just a guy flying. And boy, it was difficult. It was months—six or eight months—before I accepted the first flying shots from Denys Coop.

*A number of the press releases indicated you had something like a thousand people*

*and eleven units working for you at one time. Your experience prior to SUPERMAN was primarily in television and relatively small features. How was it, trying to pull all this together?*

It was a nightmare. And it was a very lonely position to be in, because I didn't have the back-up team I would have had if I were in America, like an associate producer, a production manager, and whatnot. In England, most of the people in those capacities are hired by the producer; so all those responsibilities really fell on my little office, which was just myself and later my assistant, Mike Duthie. And of course, Stuart Baird, my editor, who's a genius, and who also did THE OMEN for me.

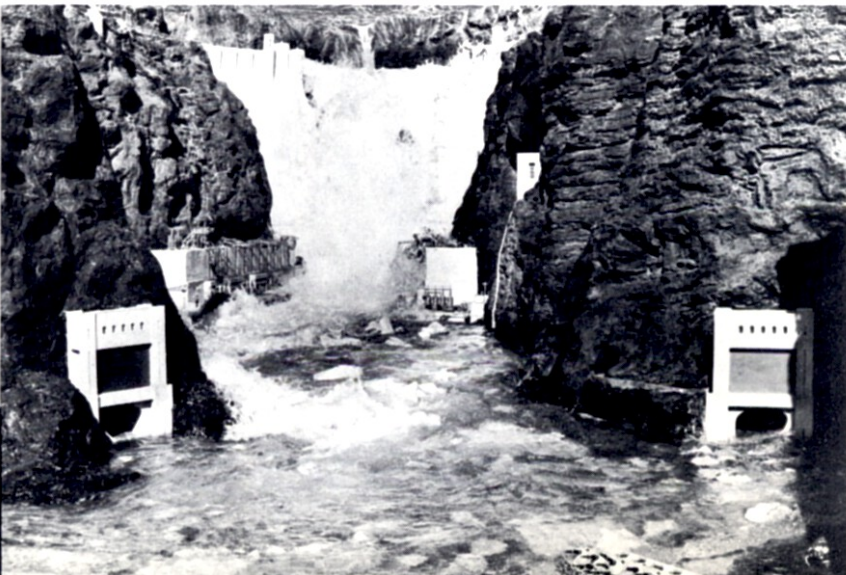
I had a golf cart with a radio in it, and my office would have the home base radio. And I'd get calls all over the lot: "You're wanted on 'A' Stage for a lineup. . .the 007 stage is ready for a rehearsal. . .you're needed in the cutting room. . ." So, I'd just travel from one to the other. It was bananas. But I had to be in every one of those places because it was all in my head. That's also part of the two-year paying my dues, because my head got so tired—it really did. I'm still recuperating. I just like to lay around the house and swim and sleep and that's all.

*Were you ever worried about the possibility that today's audiences would just reject the whole concept of Superman as being kind of silly?*

Every fucking day. Oh, sure. My biggest responsibility to the project, I felt, was somehow having to find some sort of objectivity in visualizing Superman, because everybody has seen him in their own way—either in the reality of a drawing or in the fantasy of their own mind. So I had this tremendous responsibility of trying to find some sort of middle road. Also of jumping the time lap from 1938 to 1978. That was the most difficult flight of them all: not just making him fly, but making him fly through that time warp to be accepted today. And boy, it did my heart good when I saw an audience react the first time.

*Was there any consideration given to doing it as a period piece?*

There was at first. But nobody knew what they wanted, really. There's no way I would have done it period. We could have gotten away with a lot more, and it would have been a lot easier, but I don't think it would have done half of what it's doing today. When Superman says, "I'm here to



*Left: Donner hired production designer John Barry when he found that a year's preproduction work already done on the picture was totally worthless. Right: A miniature of Boulder Dam bursting, done by Derek Meddings. Most viewers found this sequence not up to the standards set by Universal for an identical sequence in EARTHQUAKE. Even worse was a miniature used to film the floodwaters downstream, done after Meddings had left the picture.*



fight for truth, justice and the American way," usually there's such a laugh that you don't even hear Lois say, "You're going to fight every elected politician in this country." I mean, that's it for me—that's why the film has to be "today." You're looking at a former arch-liberal who is finding himself becoming totally conservative as time goes on, because nothing seems to work out there and I'm getting a little fed up.

*You said you went through many months before accepting any of the flying scenes. What sorts of things did you try and then throw out?*

I tried skydiving and threw that out. But basically, we didn't throw too much out. Usually we'd try things and then modify them. We used a number of systems, but our main one was a very mobile, new form of front projection which enabled us to zoom both camera and projector and float them both, too. This was very unusual, because the old front projectors weigh a ton. Ours weighed thirty-five pounds.

*What do you mean by "float them?"*

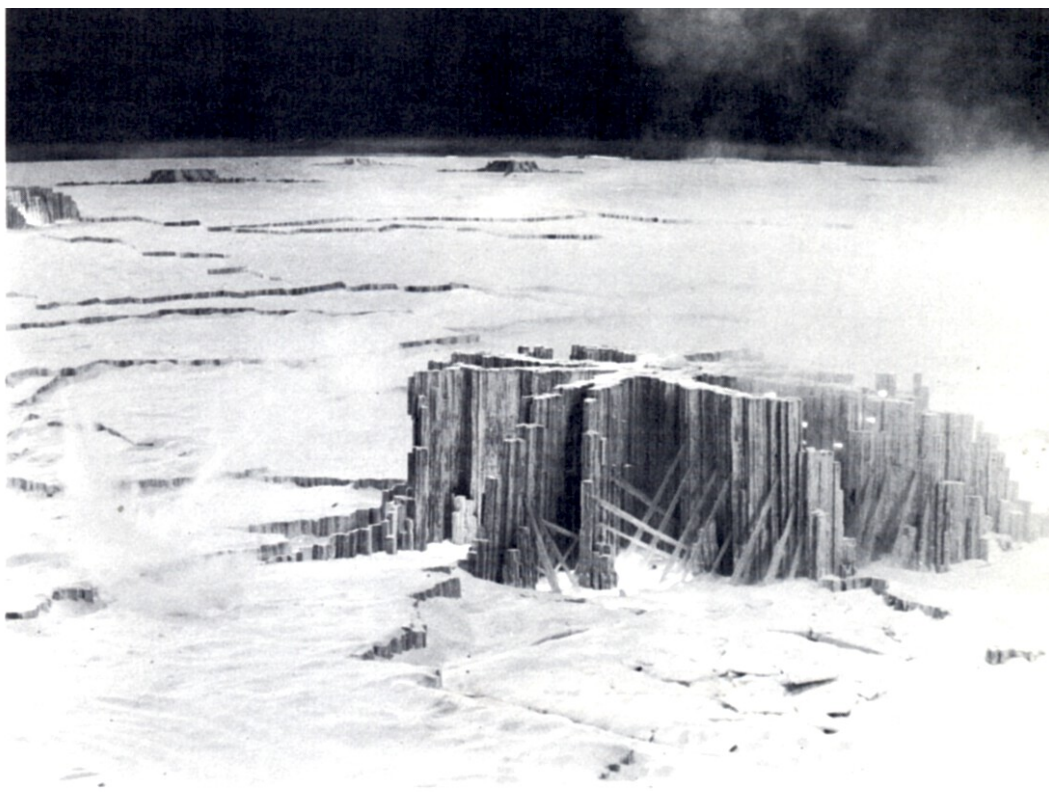
We could hang the projector and camera from what we call a sky hook or an "S" pin, and move them around. Superman wasn't flying, obviously. He had to be in a solid position, so whatever movement we got out of him was limited to a great degree. The camera had to give you the movement of flight. We also used some travelling mattes—blue backing—which I was never happy with. We even did some real flying—flying him on cranes from ridiculous heights. Most of that didn't work. We tried flying a stuntman from a 300-foot crane behind the Golden Gate Bridge miniature. And since the bridge was only about sixty feet long, we had to have him behind the model several hundred feet, and we'd swing him from this monstrous crane in a long, sweeping arc. That didn't work. We did some night flying on cranes, though. It was dangerous, and we never should have done it; but thank God, we were lucky. Anyway, those were the modes. We didn't use any back projection at all. We played with it some, but we were never able to pull it off.

*Is the front projection system you mentioned the Zoptic system?*

Yes. Zoran Perisic developed it. It has a lot of handicaps and liabilities, but it far surpasses anything else because of its weight. Using that, we could zoom either in coordination with the camera or without—zoom both together, or individually. What we were working on for SUPERMAN II is a lot more light out of this operation, because we could never get the proper amount of light. Poor Denys Coop, director of process photography, would scream and struggle to get an exposure; and he did genius things with the amount of light we had. But Zoran is aware of this problem, and we have people working very diligently now, to lick it.

We also have people working on memory bank operations. I'd like to call them computers, but I guess they're really not. These'll be so we can repeat, frame-by-frame, things with inanimate objects, and frame-by-frame front projection processes that will eventually become background plates for Superman's flights.

*What did you use to suspend Christopher Reeve in front of your front projection or blue screens?*



*Krypton—John Barry's imaginative production design, miniature work by Derek Meddings.*

All kinds of things—anything from wires and cables hung from overhead rigs and stage cranes, to what we call pole arms—rigs that came only knee-high, or hydraulic arms that came out of the screen zero degrees from the lens.

*I understand you had problems with Superman's cape.*

Yeah, that cape was a bitch. I guess you just can't anticipate everything. We spent months getting our first flying shot, and then we looked at it and something wasn't right. It was the cape; it didn't move right. So we had to build all kinds of gimmicks and little things to go under the cape. We tried electronic movements, bottled air, everything. And finally Les Bowie came up with the idea of wiring the cape inside like an umbrella, which we could control with little gears to give a feeling of flight. But even that was good only from certain angles. Other times we had to add air and stuff. We had about fifty capes in different weights and sizes for different lenses and perspective changes. It was endless. I'd like to throw out half the things I see on the screen now because I hate the costumes. Of course, only audiences that go three or four times and study it are ever going to notice. But I see it, and I hate it. I swear we could have had a costume that was seamless but, again, that was a major pre-production decision, before I came on, and so we didn't change it. Sheer stupidity. There were so many things I wanted to do right, but I couldn't do right then. They had absolutely wasted a year's worth of preproduction work, as far as I was concerned. Boots—I threw out the boots and redesigned boots, but then finally I had to go with what I had. They were awful. I had to keep changing them. Sometimes I had the zipper on the side, sometimes on the back, sometimes on the front, depending on how he was standing. Those sorts of things were so easily anticipated, but nobody did it.

Fortunately, the audiences go in and they come out, and it works for them. If

one of those things didn't work—if they laughed at Superman instead of with him, the picture would have been destroyed. And that's what I struggled so hard with—not that they didn't want to do it right. I had to fight them every step of the way, because I knew if I didn't get it right, I was dead.

Even so, a lot of things still make me cringe. Some of the miniatures I hate with a passion! Those are the ones that were not done by the maestro. That was Derek Meddings, and I lost Derek because the producer—again the producer!—did not tie him up properly and had no idea what the duration of the film was going to be. And so I lost him to James Bond. He did give me his input, but he had to be there, looking through that camera every second and changing things, and he wasn't.

*Which of the miniatures was he responsible for?*

Well, he was responsible for Boulder Dam, but not the reverse end of Boulder Dam, where the little town gets wiped out. He was responsible for the destruction of the Krypton models, Air Force One, and a lot in picture two.

*The backside of Boulder Dam is one of the things you're unhappy with?*

Yes, very. No fault of anybody, except it's just that the people who were doing it were rushed. I had to have it, and it just wasn't their selling point. Derek should have been doing it. And I didn't have him. That was a tremendous compromise for me.

*There were rumors during the production, right up to a week before release, that you were having trouble with the flying effects—that the wires were showing and you were throwing away a lot of stuff.*

Bullshit. I mean, sure, if I wasn't happy, we'd re-do it. I heard all kinds of things about how we were delayed in delivering the picture because you could see the wires. Any filmmaker knows that's stupid. If you see the wires, you rephotograph it. If you rephotograph it and you still see the wires, you paint them out—it can be done.



"They didn't buy Marlon Brando the actor; they bought Marlon Brando the name. They bought him to back up their investment, and once he agreed to do the picture, they were able to raise the money on his name. So I don't begrudge the man his \$3.7 million, not at all."

I will say that right up until the time we had to turn it over for printing, we were still out in optical houses for re-dos. I wish I had another six months; I would have perfected a lot of things. But at some point you've got to turn the picture over.

*Marlon Brando and Gene Hackman were signed before you, weren't they?*

Yes.

*You were in on the selection process for Superman?*

Oh, yes.

*There was quite a lot of press coverage at the time over who was the latest candidate for the role, ranging all the way from Robert Redford to Bruce Jenner.*

That was before I came on the picture. It all preceded me.

*How did you cast Christopher Reeve?*

Well, when I came on the picture in January, the first thing I did was hire Lynn Stalmaster, the casting director—I think he's probably one of the best in the business—and I gave him the thankless job of finding Superman. And I saw a lot of actors. When I went to New York to see some, Christopher was one of the ones I saw. But at the time, I thought he was a little young for it. I was really looking for somebody another five years older. And he was a little skinny, even though he assured us he could put on some weight.

After a lot more looking, we finally got to the point where we had to go back to a different age bracket, and since we were, there was Christopher Reeve. So we brought him over to London, and the minute he put on the costume, this tall, skinny kid just decided that he could do it. He really felt he could put on the weight and build up. And he did, in only about three months. But when I go back now and look at the tests—those old stills of Chris—I tell you, it was just blind faith.

Some of the earliest stuff we shot was in New York. When he lands with the burglar in front of 9 West 57th, he was as skinny as he ever was in the picture, and you can see

the difference in later cuts. But he was just in the process of building up at that point. That was in July, and he'd already been working diligently on it since April. Then, from that point on his body just kept getting bigger and bigger. . .

*So you were pleased with him?*

Oh, yeah. And he's really a good actor. I'm not going to say there's nobody who could have played that part; but as far as I am concerned, there's nobody else who could have.

*Time magazine reported that Marlon Brando showed up on the set and wanted to play Jor-El as a "green suitcase." Is that true? Or was he just putting you on?*

Marlon's the kind of man that if he can collect his money and not do his deed, he'd be only too happy to do so. I was warned by a good friend of his, Jay Kanter, who is head of production for Fox, that Marlon wanted to play it as a green suitcase, and I said, "You're kidding!" Then I spoke to Francis Ford Coppola, because he had just finished a second film with Marlon. He gave me a little hint on how to handle Marlon: "Let him talk, and he'll give you your own answer." So when he came in and said, "You know, maybe I shouldn't look like people on Krypton; maybe I ought to look like a bagel"—well, I had already heard about the green suitcase, so I was pretty well set. But the producer almost fainted. Eventually, Marlon talked himself out of it by telling me a story about a child and then relating back to it later.

*Brando's been known to have some eccentric on-the-set behavior. Did you have any problems with him?*

I was prepared, but Marlon turned out to be a love. I really enjoyed him totally. He was disciplined and wonderful to be with as the day was long. So all my preparation in that area was totally wasted. The moment he walked on the set he went over and said hello to every guy on the crew. He was never late; he had a good sense of humor; and he worked under trying conditions. He had a touch of the flu, was jet-lagged and tired. The set was over 105 degrees, the costume he wore weighed about thirty pounds, and he had a wig which was really uncomfortable—that son-of-a-bitch was really terrific. He never even complained. But one day he said, "I feel terrible. I've got a cold, I've got jet lag—I'd like to go home." And I said, "I can't stop you, but it's going to cost me a lot of time and money." So he said, "I'll give you a free day."

*With \$3.7 million for two weeks' work, that was damned decent of him.*

Well, it was, really. Listen, those people bought him for a reason. They didn't buy Marlon Brando the actor; they bought Marlon Brando the name. They bought him to back up their investment, and once he agreed to do the picture, they were able to raise the money on his name. So I don't begrudge the man, not at all. He's totally entitled to that. I should have seen the handwriting on the wall that day, because when I told Spengler about the free day, he said, "Did you get it in writing?"

*I understand that the budget was a secret from everyone, including you.*

Right. I was never told.

*Do you have any idea how much the picture cost?*

I'd say, at this point, you're probably talking \$50 to \$55 million for both films.

*Richard Lester reportedly came on the production to mediate between you and the producers. How did that come about?*

This is really bizarre. Richard Lester had been suing the Salkinds for his money on THREE and FOUR MUSKETEERS, which he had never gotten. He told me he's won a lot of his lawsuits, but each time he sued them in one country, they'd move to another—from Costa Rica to Panama to Switzerland. So when I took the picture, Richard Lester took me aside and said, "Don't do it. Don't work for them. I was told not to, but I did it. Now I'm telling you not to, but you'll probably do it and end up telling the next guy." Anyway, when I was having so much trouble with Spengler, the old man [Alexander Salkind] brought Lester in to be the go-between. Now, I didn't trust Lester, and I told him so. But he said, "Believe me, I'm only doing it because they're paying me the money that they owe me from the lawsuit. I'll never come onto your set unless you ask me; I'll never go to your dailies. I'm just here. I have to come in a certain number of hours each day. If I can help you in any way, call me."

*With all the problems you had with the producers, I'm surprised you didn't get fired.*

They tried—many times. But by then, Warners had gotten involved in distribution and one thing they had was the right of director approval. And there were only four names on their list. It was me, Friedkin and Spielberg and maybe someone else. It was just this misplaced loyalty they had toward



*Left: Lex Luthor (Gene Hackman) taunts Superman with his Kryptonite key-chain. Donner came onto the film after Hackman had been cast, but still tried to tone down the BATMAN-like script in rewrites by Tom Mankiewicz. Right: Hackman and Donner on the Fortress of Solitude set filming a scene in the sequel, in which Luthor is featured as an agent of the main villains, Zod, Non and Ursa, who escape from the Phantom Zone.*



Pierre, that was their mistake. Monies were just flushed away—totally wasted. And that was heartbreaking to me. I hate to see money thrown away when it should've been up there on the screen. None of it was wasted flamboyantly, you know. Nobody lived big or did ridiculous things with it. It was just a total lack of knowledge, that's all. If I were arranging a picture like this, instead of hiring people that were more stupid than I was, so I'd look bright, I'd have hired the brightest people in the whole goddamned world—if for no other reason than just to save me. And he did just the opposite.

*I can imagine that, in your readings of the script, there must have been a lot of "how-are-we-going-to-do-this" stuff?*

All the time.

*Were there any major segments of the script that you had to throw out because you couldn't do them?*

No. Just the opposite, really. I added a lot of stuff. We did make concessions, though. I don't recall what they were now, but I remember a lot of times something just couldn't be beaten one way so I would change it.

*Despite your special Oscar for visual effects, SUPERMAN went largely unrecognized in the Academy Awards nominations this year.*

I'm just totally disgusted, despondent, and have the greatest possible disrespect for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Not for me. But how dare this select club of 3800 people look past Geoffrey Unsworth? If you look at the pictures that were nominated for best cinematography, it's a fucking sin that his name wasn't up there because his work far surpasses anything I've seen this year. How dare they treat him with such disdain and disrespect when that photography outclasses a hundred times over half the shit they have seen? What a genius of a motion picture cameraman he was; he was the master. And he didn't even get a goddamned nomination! I don't believe it. And art direction. They put up pictures like CALIFORNIA SUITE—duplications of the Beverly Hills Hotel. *Big deal!* Just look at what John Barry did for SUPERMAN! And he wasn't nominated either.

I think the Academy is a disgrace. It certainly isn't peers on a peer level. It's the most political, ridiculous thing I've ever seen—this convinced me. I'd like to be awarded once so I could get up there and speak my piece.

*At one point, not long before the release, it was reported that you were going to end SUPERMAN I in a cliffhanger.*

I was, but then I finally decided, "Hey, if SUPERMAN I is a success, they're going to do a sequel. If it ain't a success, a cliffhanger ending ain't going to bring them to see SUPERMAN II." We'd done what we set out to do, and there was no real way of capping it. And I felt it would hurt the love scene between Lois and Superman in the end if I went on and did that, so I just said the hell with it.

*How were you going to lead into the second film?*

Superman was going to leave Hackman and Beatty in the prison, fly up past the camera just as he does, and then I was going to pan up into the sky and pick up the rocket that he had left tumbling. You see it shut off, and you see the Zone of Si-



*Brando banishes Terence Stamp, Jack O'Halloran, and Sarah Douglas to the Phantom Zone.*

lence with the three villains in it; then, all of a sudden, the rocket goes past them and there's an atomic explosion, and it blows up the Zone of Silence, freeing Terence Stamp, Jack O'Halloran and Sarah Douglas. Then you see them going to the moon, where they destroy a moon mission—which we've already shot, and it's fantastic. Then they go to Earth and start breaking up the White House and such. But then I figured it was just too much like television—tune in next week, you know—so we chopped it.

*Aside from what you've mentioned, what else can we look forward to?*

The three villains come to Earth, and since they have the same molecular strength as Superman, it's therefore three against one. And there's the possibility that Lex Luthor is going to be smart enough to become their agent and represent them. And that Lois may outwit Superman and find out who he is. And he may fall in love with her. And they may make love.

*What do the DC Comics people have to say about that?*

They've approved it already. It's done so beautifully. And Superman destroys his father, Jor-El, for the love of a woman. I won't go on from there.

*How does he destroy his father?*

By using all the energy from the crystals for another purpose—the crystals in the Fortress of Solitude. SUPERMAN II's going to be a helluva film. There's not a whole lot left to do on it, but what's left could take months—like a major aerial battle between Superman and the three villains, and the destruction of Metropolis. And then there are two or three pivotal scenes with Superman and Lois that are written and ready to go. Not too much, but enough.

*Is it your best guess that you'll be finishing it up?*

I'd like to think I'm going to be. I'd be very disappointed if I weren't.

*Are you going to have to work with Pierre Spengler again?*

I'd work with him again, but only on

my terms. As long as he has nothing to say as the producer, and is just liaison between Mr. Salkind and his money, that's fine. As long as he doesn't interfere in any way, because I just won't go through that again. If they don't want it on those terms, then they've got to go out and find another director—it sure as shit ain't going to be me.

Richard Donner argued eloquently for the need to recommence work on SUPERMAN II by the end of February. Major special effects sequences had yet to be completed, they were on the verge of losing some of their prime technicians to other projects, and the sequel's release was locked in for the summer of 1980. But February came and went without event. Weary of waiting for the uncommitted sequel, Christopher Reeve signed to star in Richard Matheson's SOMEWHERE IN TIME for Universal, scheduled to begin shooting in late May. This action prompted a lawsuit by the Salkinds which was ultimately settled with the agreement that Reeve would report to Pinewood for SUPERMAN II by the end of July.

What came as a major shock to the industry, in light of SUPERMAN's boxoffice success, was a March 15th communique from the Salkinds to Donner's agent, advising that their client's services were no longer required on SUPERMAN II—this despite the fact that Pierre Spengler had been replaced as producer by Richard Lester. Guy Hamilton, whose last-minute departure from the original SUPERMAN had prompted Donner's entrance into the project, was signed to complete the sequel.

Donner indicated his surprise at this announcement, and said, "The Salkinds and Spengler have now seen fit to replace me with the original director, whose material I had to radically change to make the picture you have seen—or Dick Lester, who, as he explained to me, is still trying to get his money from them. Since I completed at least 80% of the second film, I only hope they cannot hurt it that much." □



## SUPERMAN

"...has finally been brought down to earth."

**SUPERMAN** A Warner Brothers Release. 12/78. 141 minutes. In Technicolor, Panavision 70mm and Dolby Stereo. Produced by Pierre Spengler. Executive Producer, Ilya Salkind. Directed by Richard Donner. Screenplay by Mario Puzo, David Newman, Leslie Newman and Robert Benton. Director of Photography, Geoffrey Unsworth. Music by John Williams. Special Effects by Colin Chilvers. Production Designer, John Barry.

Jor-El . . . . . Marlon Brando  
Lex Luthor . . . . . Gene Hackman  
Superman . . . . . Christopher Reeve  
Otis . . . . . Ned Beatty  
Lois Lane . . . . . Margot Kidder  
Perry White . . . . . Jackie Cooper

What a brilliantly ironic stroke to begin SUPERMAN with Marlon Brando saying, "This is no fantasy." For while the film's subject, by its very nature, contradicts that claim, director Richard Donner goes to great lengths to make us believe Brando's opening line. The film clearly scales visually exciting heights that alone would make the motion picture worth our trouble—from the spectacular sets, special effects and photography to the humanity and superior acting and good humor displayed in the love story between Superman and Lois Lane. Yet the same film that boasts this kind of technical mastery also plummets us to the depths of comic book inanity and blatant incongruities, suggesting that picked wallets rushed Part One out of the editing room far too soon.

While the special effects may be inconsistent in quality, when they do take off, they soar. Particularly imaginative are the luminous "crystal" sets conceived by John Barry for the planet Krypton and Superman's Fortress of Solitude at the north pole. Photography by Geoffrey Unsworth during the first hour is expansive

by Steven Dimeo

Caroline Munro

and evocative, especially in the Kansas wheat fields after the death of Jonathan Kent (Glenn Ford), when Superman realizes his boyhood is now over. Even the credits properly foreshadow promising visual magnificence, enhanced by the sustained grandness of another John Williams score, or by the Dolby stereo which enhances the 70mm reality from a mystically colorful universe to the troubled skies over New York's "Metropolis." The touchstone of the movie's technical proficiency, of course, is whether or not Superman flies convincingly. Thanks to a sophisticated system of wires, pulleys and booms, as well as the Zoptic front projection process pioneered here by inventor Zoran Perisic, he generally does. In some scenes, though, the traveling mattes and process photography behind 26-year-old Christopher Reeve lack the same kind of resolution as his own body. No matter how rigid he keeps himself, the background grounds us then only to the reality of the movie theatre seats. And much too often we can distinguish the miniature models in long shots, and the times when a still figure is shot from a cannon at a speed regrettably no match for the proverbial speeding bullet.

The fact that we are still carried along anyway in those instances is more a tribute to Reeve himself, who acts as if he's completely convinced he really can fly. In fact, the acting by this liberal arts graduate from Cornell and soap opera regular (LOVE OF LIFE), as well as by the love in this reel life, Margot Kidder, is the real life in the film. It's when the two of them are on screen together that we care the most. The true strength of the film derives from their humor, almost making them a peculiar modern-day blend of Tracy and Hepburn and Bogart and Bacall, with an aerial version of Astaire and Rogers thrown in there some-

where. The high point comes, of course, when Kidder interviews Reeve just before he quite literally takes her for the ride of her life (sexual innuendoes abounding). "How big are you?" she asks, quickly correcting that to "how tall." And sometime after she asks if he can see what color underwear she's wearing, his X-ray vision improved once she moves from a lead flower box, he says, "Pink!" with a boyish glint in his eyes. Clearly, it isn't so much what they say as the demure way they say it. Their exchange is not repartee so much as repressed play.

This more sophisticated kind of humor—if it can be easily passed off under that rubric—is evident also in some of the script's clever self-parody. For example, when Superman tries to look for some place to get out of the business suit of the mild-mannered reporter, he glances disgruntled at the modern open phone-stand before settling for a quick-change in a revolving door. Sometimes this brand of humor slips from wit to James Bondisms. Corn ripens when Superman turns to a thief who has just thwacked him over the head with a pipe and puns, "Bad vibrations?" Again, Luthor, whose silly machinations here have him engineer an atomic blast to jar the San Andreas fault and loft his land just east of it into beach property (he has the mind of most realtors), has to tell Superman, whose strength is failing in the presence of Kryptonite, "You've got your faults and I've got mine."

Those instances are certainly more acceptable than the BATMAN-like camp throughout the Luthor episodes. If Donner and Mankiewicz have attempted what they have called "versimilitude" in the characters of Superman and Lois Lane, they all but throw it away when they pit a real man, who is more than a man, against a mere cardboard caricature. When

do we ever see any indication that Luthor, living in a posh but rent-free apartment 200 feet below the Metropolis subway, with a right-hand man who's a moron and a red—and generally empty-headed girlfriend whose primary use is to look luscious, could ever muster the power and genius to battle someone of Superman's stature? To place the villains in a parody and still try to make Superman a believable mortal reduces our hero to his enemy's subterranean level. Even in the screened comic-book-like adventures of our Sixties superman, James Bond, he must face adversaries worthy enough to seriously endanger him and to warrant all that sophisticated weaponry he has to bring to bear against them. It doesn't help here either, when the script keeps Superman ranting straight-faced to the villain just how "warped" and "twisted" a crook he is. Talk about overkill. Why the wasted overstatements anyway when Superman could simply crush Luthor's comic-book evil to the pulp he already is? And if a god isn't going to make sport of another wanton fly, are we to end up making sport of the god? What else can we conclude of a hero who, on delivering Luthor to the prison, delivers a dead-pan line to the warden straight from the Marvel comic tradition that he has just captured the criminal in the name of "truth, justice and the American way"? Donner's double-edged sword cuts from the real to the risible so frequently towards the end that he undercuts the very significance of his lead character, making the myth more of a near-myth.

Besides this inconsistency in tone, a number of annoying irregularities crop up. Some of the threads will apparently be tied together in SUPERMAN II, half of which is already on film. But as a piece of art which should stand alone, SUPERMAN I remains only half a movie. Take, for instance, the opening sequence, certainly one of the film's most imaginative, when Jor-El condemns three rebels to imprisonment in a roving mirror that whisks them off into space. However impressive that scene, it neither advances Superman's life story nor offers insight into the character of Jor-El. And few viewers know in this sitting that the opening trial is anything but fascinatingly irrelevant (although in Part Two, Superman is forced to fight these three criminals on Earth). Even Superman's saving Air Force One will mean something by SUPERMAN II, when the three rebels attack the president (E. G. Marshall). But without knowing any of this, the story really begins with Jor-El playing Cassandra to the council that sentences the trio. Even so, we can't help wondering how Jor-El knows Krypton is about to explode or why it should. The dream-like prologue on Krypton becomes little more than another missed opportunity, this time to build Jor-El's character into something other than Brando's endorsement of P. T. Barnum's philosophy.

And, talking about other free-

## STARCRASH

"Everything about it is strictly kiddie-matinee."

**STARCRASH!** A New World Release. 4/79. In color. 92 minutes. Produced by Nat and Patrick Wachsberger. Directed by Lewis Coates (Luigi Cozzi). Screenplay by Cozzi and Nat Wachsberger. Director of Photography, Roberto D'Ettore. Edited by Peter Taylor.

Akton . . . . . Marjoe Gortner  
Stella Star . . . . . Caroline Munro  
Emperor . . . . . Christopher Plummer  
Prince Simon . . . . . David Hasselhoff

From its opening shot of the good ship "Murray Leinster" to the light-saber swung by Marjoe Gortner, you could spend all 92 minutes of STARCRASH! spotting the allusions, parodies and rip-offs. The obvious reference is to BARBARELLA, with Caroline Munro decked out in a couple of strips of leather, a plastic bag and a G-string. Since they didn't spend the money on costumes, I'd like to say that they spent it on effects, but they are also skimpy and unconvincing. The sky is full of red, blue and yellow lights; ex-

by Judith P. Harris

terior star fields look totally different when viewed from inside the space ships. Almost all the planets appear as crescents, with no surface detail. Matted-in skyscrapers of fast-moving clouds bleed right into the horizon. And anyone who ever criticized Ray Harryhausen will bite his tongue when the giant robotrix lumbers into view, throwing her shadow onto the obviously-painted sky.

Everything about the plot is strictly kiddie-matinee. Pirates Stella Star and Akton must save civilization from a weapon the size of a planet, and deal with such fierce things as lava lamps the size of elephants, and troglodytes that appear to have escaped from a Monty Python skit. They find this weapon, the head villain blows it up, but in the climactic space battle, he appears to have forgotten the incident and threatens to use it again. Munro does little but smolder and look sexy (which she does extremely well), whereas Gortner, playing a prescient alien, seems to deliver his lines in his own version of blank verse. This film is a big disappointment. □





floating elements, what about that business concerning Kryptonite? Luthor seems to infer from Lois' interview of Superman published in the *Daily Planet* that a Kryptonite meteorite has to be hazardous to his health. But even if we accepted the fact that Superman would publicly admit his Achilles' heel, how could he have known that in the first place? The last time he had been exposed to his planet, he seemed to be doing quite well as a baby. And isn't it more logical to assume that a piece of his home planet, rather than debilitating him, would only strengthen him instead? A more glaringly incongruous shift in point of view also damages the film's high point, when Superman carries Lois aloft. As they end their lyrical night journey in the air together, Lois thinks to herself on the soundtrack, "Can you read my mind?" and then launches into a much too lengthy apostrophe to this "god" she's obviously fallen for while he's raised her to new heights. But we already know everything she voices from the glazed look on her face. If we can take the temporary lapse of hearing her thoughts when we've never even known Superman's anywhere else in the film, it would have been far more effective for her merely to say "Can you read my mind" and leave it at that with all its unspoken suggestiveness.

And how, above all, can a movie this expensive allow the even more inexcusable ambiguities of plot? When Superman saves California and loses Lois to a fault, he gives out an empathic Lear-like howl and starts furiously circling the globe: no mere expression of grief; he means to turn back time and resurrect her. Then why do we see in reverse the episode when Superman, unable to stop an earthquake-weakened dam from breaking, saves a town from the flood by damming up the river with a boulder dam of his own? Aside from having to be subjected again to one of the least convincing miniature models in the film, including these shots only introduces unnecessary confusion. Since Jimmy Olsen (Mark McClure) confirms in his reappearance afterwards that Superman still saved him from the dam, we must assume the dam did burst. Then was the town left to be destroyed by the resulting flood while Superman rushed to rescue Lois instead? All these unforgivable discrepancies in a supposedly real drama of the unreal? A careful film editor, even frustrated by a script that left such a detail up in the air, would still have omitted any other cuts running in reverse but those involving Lois.

In any case, for those few exciting moments when we see Reeve skirting through the skies to help us out of our obsession with reality—whether he is incredibly pushing up the magma from the earth's core or lighting with an angel-like flutter on Lois' balcony—we can almost forgive him the sins of this too-human vehicle that has finally brought him down to earth. □



Jonathan Harker (Bruno Ganz) plays dinner guest to Klaus Kinski's squeaky and feeble Dracula.

### NOSFERATU "One of the most chaste and speedless films in the history of the genre."

NOSFERATU A 20th Century-Fox Release. 2/79. In DeLuxe color. 96 (124) minutes. Executive Producer, Michael Gruskoff. Produced, written and directed by Werner Herzog. Director of Photography, Jorge Schmidt-Reitwein. Music by Popol Vuh and Florian Fricter. Associate Producer, Uwe Weider.

Count Dracula . . . Klaus Kinski  
Lucy . . . Isabelle Adjani  
Jonathan Harker . . . Bruno Ganz  
Renfield . . . Roland Topor  
Writer . . . . . Paul Monette

1979 may be Hollywood's Year of the Vampire, but if Werner Herzog's cold and sticky remake of F. W. Murnau's silent classic NOSFERATU (1922) is any indication of what's in store, then we're in for the usual vampire trappings. The film is a tremendous disappointment—it is atrociously shallow in style, yet technically clear and clean-eyed; the production values are very impressive. But all this supports a maddeningly vague narrative. It is one of the most chaste and speedless films in the history of the genre.

Like Tod Browning's 1931 DRACULA, NOSFERATU '79 (subtitled "The Vampyre") was shot bilingually—in the director's native German and the producer's native English. The German version, longer by ten minutes, fills the many gaps in continuity that were trimmed from the American version, meant to increase the film's pace. Despite that, Fox will release the foreign-language version later this year. After the shorter domestic sibling received a couple of disastrous sneak preview screenings late in February, the distributor kicked its release back to October.

What Herzog has given us is no more than a stylistic transplanta-

by Tim Lucas

tion of Murnau's finest imagery into a slickly glossy, breathless atmosphere. With Stoker's *Dracula* now in public domain, Herzog has seen no reason to continue with Murnau's "Graf Orlock" bootleg treachery (by now an intractable part of the original film's mystique). The only evident excuse for this remake is to reprise the celebrated ghoulish makeup of Max Schreck, and for treading advantageously on the first important vampire film.

There is an unnaturally heavy emphasis on Harker's preparation for his trip to Castle Dracula. We are fully fed on his morning routine with wife Lucy; we see him solicited by the demented Renfield to sell some tacky land to a reclusive nobleman; watch him place Lucy in the care of friends; and observe his entire horesback trek through the Carpathians. In the time it would take Terence Fisher to stake the first vampire bride, Harker has only loitered as far as the fabled Rumanian tavern and learned the superstitions of ignorant gypsies.

From this point on, something original keeps threatening to happen, but rarely does. Dracula is introduced for the first time as a monster able to prey only upon those minds capable of believing in him. To support this interpretation, Herzog plays games throughout the film, involving the different points of view adopted by his characters towards reality, fantasy, etc. At one decently entertaining point, Harker is haggling with a coachman, who is washing his horses at the side of the Borgo Pass trail. The coachman insists that he has no coach, that he sees no road to Borgo Pass, that he has no horses. What the man is actually saying is that he has no weaknesses. It is a handsomely original attitude, and one that nearly livens Herzog's vision.

There are other random good moments: the vampire lunging at Harker's cut finger at dinner; the

slow inching toward center-screen of the vampire ravaged ship, its blood-drained captain tied dead to the wheel; the public burning of all furniture in the town square, bordered by grunting hogs and pall-bearers burying the plague-infested dead; the last supper of a family, seen dining out of doors, their ankles swarming with grey rats. Sadly, these diversions are too few and far between—the remainder is filled with sluggish recitals from Harker's diary and the ship captain's log. Any action in the film is hearsay—had Dracula's hand avoided Lucy's breast in the elegant but unsatisfying climax, NOSFERATU might have become the artiest G-rated film ever.

The conclusion has Harker finally succumbing to vampiric infection, murmuring some nonsense about "having much to do," and then riding off into the horizon much like Boris Karloff in Mario Bava's BLACK SABBATH. Here, though, it makes no sense; Dracula has just died of sunlight exposure yet disciple Harker, already blue-faced and bat-toothed, rides a goddamned horse through its rays! Herzog jeopardizes his credibility for the sake of an illogical plot twist? Why preserve the creaky conventions of early vampire movies only to shatter them with a last-minute injection of Seventies pessimism?

NOSFERATU also contains frequent nods to Herzog's earlier successes: the raft which carries Dracula's coffin to ship, underlined by a musical apostrophe by the brilliant Popol Vuh, harkens back to the serene tropical lyricism of AGUIRRE, as do the shots of multitudes of rats, reminiscent of the monkeys in that film's compelling finale. Familiar actors from Herzog's films pop up in cameos, notably the record-keeper from EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF AND GOD AGAINST ALL, who plays a powerless city official in NOSFERATU's conclu-



sion (which also has Van Helsing arrested for staking the vampire, in a NIGHT STALKER parody).

As Fox's classy ads promise, Herzog's film is occasionally filled with a sense of (misplaced) humor—there are potentially intriguing concepts of humor, which the traditions of the vampire film encompass, but which Herzog ignores. Much of the film's "amusement" is drawn, of course, from the madman Renfield (a delightful performance by author-illustrator Roland Topor), whose association with the Count is never granted historical perspective—they simply seem to have met at a party somewhere. Their sole dialogue together in this film is uproariously handled and sublimely ridiculous. Herzog similarly flaunts his unregistered artistic license when Harker, sitting in the Rumanian tavern undergoing local interrogation, admits Castle Dracula is his destination. One would think, from the reaction he reaps from the gypsies, that he were instead heading for the offices of E.F. Hutton. But the biggest chuckle of all may be the adjectives with which one must describe the washed-out color photography ("bloodless"), the film's pace ("lifeless") and the imaginative content ("drained").

As Dracula, Klaus Kinski's performance is rigid and snivelling, as if acting reflexively against comparison with other screen Draculas (although he essayed a fine Renfield in the otherwise dismal 1970 film COUNT DRACULA). He deliberately blows Stoker's evocative "children of the night"

speech, perhaps admitting that it had been spoken definitively by Lugosi and need never be uttered again. Buckling under the memory of Christopher Lee's sweeping recoils from the crucifix, Kinski passively allows himself only enough room to react to the cross as if to bad breath. The effectiveness of his Schreck-like makeup is open to debate, and adds little to his performance. The character's "evil" heavy breathing is too squeaky for a nightmare figure, although he is bizarre and feebly aristocratic.

Isabelle Adjani steals much of Kinski's spotlight as Lucy. Her's is the only character in the film subject to any real development. Yet even she is depicted in a solitary light: as an emotional, loving woman, secretly strong, victimized by interior religious conflicts. She is the Sacrifice, a frail person with the hidden strength of surrender. As such, Adjani's performance achieves a symbolic register almost instantly, which is invaluable and complex in its relation to the vampire legend (and this film) as is the crucifix itself.

It is unlikely that a film such as this, and the rest of its contemporary kind (initially LOVE AT FIRST BITE, and then the filmed remake of the DRACULA stage play), can do much for extending the artistic margins of the horror film. Herzog fails to assert control over the genre, and instead mimics Murnau and Dreyer. NOSFERATU attempts to be crafty, but Herzog's indifference toward the material cannot be considered original. □

## THE BEES

"...one more entry in a tested and cliched field."

THE BEES A New World Release. 4/79. In color. 85 minutes. Produced, written and directed by Alfredo Zacharias. Director of Photography, Joseph Lamas. Associate Producer, Teri Schwartz. Music by Richard Gillis. Edited by Mort Tudor and Sandy Nervig.

John Norman . . . . . John Saxon  
Sandra Miller . . . . . Angel Tompkins  
Dr. Hummel . . . . . John Carradine  
Dr. Miller . . . . . Claudio Brook  
Alicia . . . . . Alicia Encinas  
Arthur . . . . . Armand Martin

John Saxon and Angel Tompkins could use an exterminator.



## BEYOND THE DOOR II

"Bava has never seemed so far away from the creaking catafalques of 'Black Sunday'..."

BEYOND THE DOOR II A Film Ventures International Release. 5/79(77). In Eastmancolor. 92 minutes. Produced and directed by Mario Bava. Screenplay by Lamberto Bava and Franco Barbieri. Directors of Photography, Bava and Giuseppe Maccari. Edited by Roberto Sterbini. Music by "I Libra." Original title: SHOCK.

Dora Baldini . . . . . Daria Nicolodi  
Bruno . . . . . John Steiner  
Marco . . . . . David Colin Jr.  
Psychiatrist . . . . . Ivan Rassinov

Absolutely devoid of the ironic humor that has marked Bava's spotty work since DANGER DIABOLIK (1968), BEYOND THE DOOR II is a visual maze in which we must sort out a relentless parade of symbols.

The film opens on the day Dora and her young son, Marco, move into a country house. Helping them is Marco's stepfather, an airline pilot named Bruno. The boy's acceptance of his new parent does not come easily. Marco overhears their lovemaking at night and, the next day, during an innocent game of tag with his mother, falls on top of her and begins humorlessly thrusting his tiny hips in and out. Later, when the child sees the two kissing at a dinner party, he openly swears to kill her for her indiscretion.

Why is Marco so unstable? His real father, a heroin-addicted sail-

by Tim Lucas

desperation. When a man breaks into a conspicuously affluent Anglo's large hives, pleading the needs of his enormous, starving family, he and his son are quickly assaulted by the bees, and the boy killed. There is no rest for the wicked in this film, nor for the weary poor.

The plot of the film wanders, as Zacharias may have been doing when he wrote the script: the story seems to have been concocted as the filming went along. The story changes directions in mid-movie, shifting, back-tracking and meandering up another, unexpected avenue in pursuit of the director's tardily-conceived idea. Heroic scientist John Saxon follows a rather ill-defined path of chromosomal and instinctual sabotage against the bees to a perverse and peculiar end, but the insects rally with a weapon of their own. This is Zacharias' one interesting notion: the Scientist, that ambivalent but finally all-powerful hero of Forties horror and Fifties sci-fi, is pictured here as essentially decent but completely impotent. Throughout the film, Saxon, Angel Tompkins and John Carradine don't know what they are doing, but they do it desperately nonetheless. They experiment with solutions like Zacharias does with his script, and like him they come up with a bummer. His entomological investigators are like real scientists—or filmmakers—scratching their heads, pottering

by John Azzopardi

or, committed suicide, for which Marco blames his mother. Dora's belief that her dead husband has taken spiritual possession of her son is formed from guilt—for having murdered the boy's father and hiding the body behind a cellar wall. Although the film's horror is manifest by the guilt-ridden mother, doubts lay generally with the child, who acts in odd ways—performing white magic, causing mechanical failures on Bruno's 747 flights, or creeping into the cellar to embrace his father's unmarked tomb.

The film is packed with arresting images. Dora finds the porcelain fingers of an old misplaced hand-shaped ornament poking up through the sofa cushions, which relates directly to a later moment: seeing her husband is away on a trip, Dora allows her son to share her bed; as she sleeps, his small hands explore her body and transform into the dead, rotting hands of her husband (a remarkable cut, then, to Bruno's return: "Been taking care of your mother for me?"). Dora cuts her fingers while playing the piano, and finds a razor blade wedged in the center keys; complementing that scene is a shot picturing a fallen vase, the scarlet rose petals spattering the keys like Dora's blood.

BEYOND THE DOOR II is a most peculiar chapter in the Bava filmography, so scientific in execution as to appear almost borderline horror. With the impression of this film, Bava has never seemed so far away from the creaking *catafalques* and swirling fog of BLACK SUNDAY. □

with an idea, seizing a bankroll like thieves and continually bitching about an absence of funds. Although the film cannot be credited with anything like suspense, there is a continual uncertainty to the behavior of our heroes: "So now what the hell do we do?"

Although the film takes an ecological tack—the drones are the army of an angry Nature—the bees seem more like libidinous pus oozing out of the Id. At every turn, Zacharias associates buzzing bees with busy human beavers, kissing, necking and whatnot. A plump, bosomy blonde trots into a dressing room from the beach in search of Copper-tone, and instead finds one killer bee, which kills her. Massing black swarms smear the sky, and descend on teenagers breaking Commandments in the front seat. Tompkins and Saxon are so stimulated by the sight of drones expiring in a haze of Saxon's deadly B(ce)DT that they retreat to his jeep and commence epidermal friction. Saxon's insecticide is a new one here: it turns the bees gay, and they begin murdering each other in a sado-masochistic frenzy. Ultimately, Zacharias' sex-as-insects metaphor speaks loudly but inarticulately. Is the human race being punished for its promiscuity? Or the bees for theirs? Whatever the answer, the film is one more entry in a tested and cliched field, its commercial merits disguised in Zacharias' unflinching instability as a film director. □





The old stalk-and-scare with an alien head-ripper.

**THE DARK**

"The story is repeatedly jarred by assaults on logic within the framework of the plot."

THE DARK A Film Ventures International Release. 5/79(78). In DeLuxe color and Panavision. 92 minutes. Produced by Dick Clark and Edward L. Montoro. Directed by John "Bud" Cardos. Screenplay by Stanford Whitmore. Director of Photography, John Morrill. Music by Roger Kellaway. Associate Producer, Igo Kantor. Special Makeup Effects by Steve Neill.

Roy Warner . . . William Devane  
Zoe Owens . . . Cathy Lee Crosby  
Mooney . . . Richard Jaeckel  
Sherman Moss . . . Keenan Wynn  
Speer . . . Warren Kemmerling  
DeRenzy . . . Jacqueline Hyde

THE DARK could have been an interesting film despite an obvious debt to the content and style of the KOLCHAK-THE NIGHT STALKER series. But apparent postproduction tampering and erratic editing has created an illogical combination of genres which just doesn't work. The basic, unadulterated plot follows a creature which stalks the streets and alleys of Los Angeles each night, ripping the heads off its victims.

All evidence points to the supernatural; a hissing chant which presages each death, the presence of "DeRenzy the Mystic," whose psychic powers predict the murders. Also under consideration is the clue of a flesh sample found under the fingernails of one of the victims, indicating that the monster is not alive. The film's original concept was that the creature was a resurrected corpse of a 19th-century murderer and cannibal. The plot obviously deals with the occult, and could have been quite accessible on those terms. But the producers evidently felt that a science fiction format would better serve their commercial needs.

The film, which was completed early last year, has been heavily doctored. New scenes have been tacked irrelevantly onto the existing story, including a prologue and some special effects which make the creature an alien invader instead of a reanimated stiff. The monster shoots rays

by Dan Scapperotti

from its eyes, causing victims to explode in flames. This sidelight, however, is never mentioned in dialogue by any of the characters, thereby widening the gap of confusion.

The new material, when combined with the original scenes, eliminates any credibility the film may have had in the first place. The story is repeatedly jarred by subsequent assaults on logic within the framework of the plot. THE DARK makes no sense; it fails to reinforce its own premise. When the creature quickly and inexplicably evaporates in a burst of flame at the film's end, by the mere touch of a burning brand, any remaining audience acceptance has long-since vaporized. The sanguine clique of corporate thieves who are making a bundle off THE DARK's new-found "sci-fi" angle, have gambled away its chances at being a halfway decent film. □

**PHANTASM**

"A brilliant little horror tease that makes up in punch what it lacks in substance. . ."

PHANTASM An Avco-Embassy Release. 3/79. In Metrocolor. 90 minutes. Produced, written and directed by Don A. Coscarelli. Co-produced by Paul Pepperman. Production designer, S. Tyer. Music by Fred Myrow and Malcolm Seagrave.

Mike . . . . . Michael Baldwin  
Jody . . . . . Bill Thornbury  
Reggie . . . . . Reggie Bannister  
Tall Man . . . . . Angus Scrimm

Don Coscarelli, a very independent filmmaker from Long Beach, California, has scored with PHANTASM, a movie brim-full of imaginative bits and pieces, interesting characters and a storyline that is freaky, outlandish and fun. Reduced to its basic elements, the film works in a fluid, manipulative sort of way, a brilliant little horror tease that makes up in punch what it lacks in substance.

Although we are not aware of it at first, the film is a dream (or, rather, a nightmare), in which teenaged Mike (Michael Baldwin), his brother and a friend discover

by John P. Hays

the awful "secret" of the neighborhood funeral home, operated by a ghoulish figure referred to in the credits as "the Tall Man." After a funeral ceremony, Mike sees this man load the unburied coffin back into the hearse and return it to the mausoleum. Such activity piques the boy's curiosity. Upon investigation of the mausoleum, Mike is menaced a zombie-like night watchman, the mysterious undertaker, a horde of monster-dwarves, and a flying silver ball (the latter an ingenious device that drills through the skull and draws a nauseatingly steady stream of pulsating blood).

The film derives its thrills from the most standard of ploys: shadows suddenly moving into frame, seemingly solid objects that unaccountably spark life, and arms reaching out to clutch at feet and shoulders. Coscarelli doesn't let the obviousness of some of the scares get him down; the pace is well-sustained considering the loosely-structured narrative. He withholds just long enough before laying down his it-was-all-a-dream-or-was-it? trump card, and by that time we are sufficiently engrossed in the adventure to accept the shift in perspective.

The special effects, created by long-time Coscarelli associate Paul Pepperman, are fine, and the sets and makeup are top-notch, especially for this relatively low-budget film. Acting quality varies from scene to scene, with Baldwin an acceptably warm and appealing hero. Secondary roles are less impressively handled, despite the remarkable energy of the cast. And "Tall Man" Angus Scrimm steals the picture with his foreboding, usually silent presence. The music, a "Tubular Bells"-like motif, lends a nightmarish edge to the proceedings. □

**DAWN OF THE DEAD**  
"Romero rejects the idea of escapist, entertaining violence for surrealistic explosions of horror. . ."

DAWN OF THE DEAD United Films. 4/79(c78). 127 minutes. In color. Produced by Richard P. Rubenstein. Written and directed by George A. Romero. Director of Photography, Michael Gornick. Assistant Producer, Donna Siegal. Edited by Romero. Music by The Goblins with Dario Argento. Special Makeup Effects by Tom Savini. Unit Manager, Jay Stover.

Stephen . . . . . David Emge  
Peter . . . . . Ken Foree  
Roger . . . . . Scott H. Reiniger  
Francine . . . . . Gaylen Ross

We begin with a scene of satirical Altman-esque chaos, in the studios of a television station, barely maintaining the airwaves; we're immediately into the horror and desperation of the cataclysm. Romero acknowledges the wide following of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD and does nothing to paint a background for this sequel. We cut sharply to a SWAT team cleaning out an impoverished housing project, quickly intersecting a thematic undertow of non-human violence that will continue to build throughout the film: "harmless" violence that exerts itself in a shooting gallery, a penny arcade or a boxing match. Indeed, further into the film we find Romero's correlation with games/violence when a motorcycle gangster is attacked by zombies as he plays a coin game in an amusement parlor. Romero rejects the idea of escapist, entertaining violence for surrealistic explosions of horror so meticulously achieved by his special effects team. One member of the SWAT force uses the apartment attack to

by Mark Lamberti

Angus Scrimm brings his peculiar graveside manner to PHANTASM.





fulfill his fantasies of indiscriminate killing; his shotgun blows the heads off both living and undead in his shooting spree, halted only when he is shot dead by another SWAT assassin.

The film's first real encounter with the undead occurs quickly—someone screams, "Don't open that door!" and suddenly the building is filled with the flesh eaters. The zombies engage the living—chunks of arms and legs and necks are bitten off in full closeup. This set piece comes to full fruition when the soldiers find themselves in the basement of the building into which the bodies of the dead were thrown. The animated dead, seated, lying, standing, are feasting on random body parts. Carnage is absolute, detached from the world above, a vision of Hell.

Whereas in *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* we were exposed gradually, in a classical film sense, to the horror, now Romero plunges full into its bloody intensity. It is within these opening scenes that we, as an audience, are set up as accomplices to the director's theme. The gore and violence is the furthest thing from escapist entertainment—pictorially revolting, the shots are edited, the cuts made in a sequence that builds so quickly and absolutely

there is no time for thought, for questioning; as soon as one horrible effect explodes, another rapidly takes its place, inundating the viewer with its jolting pace. We are not so much relieved as exhausted by the time Romero cuts away to the main characters escaping the scene via helicopter.

As he used the farmhouse in the earlier film, Romero utilizes a shopping mall, with its consumerized conveniences, as a stronghold for his heroes. Unfortunately missing is that strong, characterizing dialogue that worked so well in *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*. In *DAWN OF THE DEAD*, the characters are given more to the harsh realities of survival, in fortifying their territory (the mall) against a common enemy. There is no Harry Cooper character here. Romero no longer has time for human frailty or conflict. The director places the foe as the united enemy outside the mall. Indeed, there is little dialogue aside from barked orders as the group battles for survival.

I can't think of a film in which the rules of characterization have been so easily dispensed. Romero dwells on the characters' emotional lives only briefly, as when Francine and Stephen decide to fight to keep alive a chance for the child she is carrying out of wed-

lock, or when Roger lies dying from a zombie bite, entreating his companion to shoot him when he "comes back." In protecting their safehouse, the shopping mall in which they are free to roam the stores and set up a pseudo-culture in the form of a furnished apartment, they are reinforcing the American ideal. In one sequence, Stephen and Peter help themselves to a bank's immense piles of bundled bills. Later, Stephen defends the mall against invasion by the bikers: "We have it—it's ours," as if to claim the right to homestead. In allowing the four to clean out their new "home" by disposing of the zombies as a housewife would roaches, Romero illustrates a cultural ethic—and where better to find it than in this Temple to Consumerism.

With the climactic invasion by the motorcycle gang, Romero infuses a certainty of self-destruction into the premise. The gang, in destroying the mall, so carefully protected and now clean and shiny, is the living counterpart of the zombie horde. In their destruction of the dead, the bikers are the real villains. Suddenly we are rooting for the zombies to win, even to the point of cheering when one of the gang falls victim. The defenders, seeing that the gang poses a bigger threat to their

safety than the undead, join in the foray, shooting aimlessly at the living as well as the dead, turning the entire mall into a shooting arcade.

The graphic violence, from which we've been given a breather for the last hour, returns to build the climactic chord that sounds in the escape of the two survivors. Stephen, attacked by zombies in a stalled elevator, returns from death to lead the undead to the apartment—thus inferring that the zombies are not totally without instinct or minute intelligence. Romero questions whether intelligence can be rooted in knowledge or primeval instinct. Obviously, the zombies eat only to propagate their "religion of death." A bite infects the victim rapidly, as in vampirism. Romero never states that these killers must eat for survival. Indeed, as in the first film, no one seems to be sure just what caused the resurrection of the dead.

Although certainly not as dizzying as the opening sequence, the battle between cyclists, zombies and the hero figures paints a dramatic excursion into the apocalypse. Romero has pushed well beyond the brink of the chasm of the damned, into the bottomless well. There's no escape, just a brief respite from the onslaught. □

## QUINTET

"...presents a certain icy brilliance of surfaces, but utterly lacks any substance to back it up."

**QUINTET** A 20th Century-Fox Release. 2/79. In DeLuxe color and Panavision. 100 minutes. Produced and directed by Robert Altman. Screenplay by Frank Barhydt, Altman and Patricia Resnick. Director of Photography, Jean Boffety. Music by Tom Pierson. Executive Producer, Tommy Thompson. Associate Producer, Allan Nicholls.

Essex . . . . . Paul Newman  
Christopher . . . . . Vittorio Gassman  
Grigor . . . . . Fernando Rey  
Ambrosia . . . . . Bibi Andersson  
Vivia . . . . . Brigitte Fossey

Some say the world will end in fire, but Robert Altman holds with Sandburg's alternate possibil-

by Jordan R. Fox

*An arctic vision of doomsday, with Paul Newman and Brigitte Fossey.*

ity—that ice would also suffice. In fact, in the unspecified future time depicted here, the entire world (apparently) is all but indistinguishable from Antarctica. The remains of cities lie half-buried in the ice. With each passing day, the sun's pale rays have less and less effect. For man, the game is nearly over, and he knows it.

From out of the snowy wastes comes one man, Essex (Paul Newman), and his young woman companion Vivia (Brigitte Fossey), seeking food and shelter in what is left of one city. Vivia is the only thing bright and alive in this whole design, the unborn child she carries the sole spark of hope in this bleak and barren tableaux. When she dies so early on, a co-victim with Essex' murdered, city-dwelling brother, Essex may be left with a puzzle he must solve, but we are left with nothing to

hold onto.

All human feeling in this world has gone as cold as the corpses abandoned to packs of roving dogs. In the face of imminent, certain death, life has lost all meaning; the enervated survivors pass the time remaining in the near-continuous play of a game: *Quintet*, so named because of its five primary players (a sixth is tangentially involved). The game can be played at home or casino, requiring only the players and their individual playing pieces—small personal curios that are also a kind of signature. What Essex does not realize is that the game is also played at tournament level, and to the death. The ensuing round of deception and assassination makes for some of the most casual, passionless savagery anyone ever imagined for an end-of-the-world scenario.

*QUINTET* presents a certain icy brilliance of surfaces, but utterly lacks any substance to back it up. Blame that on an unfocused original idea, no real story to tell, a portentous approach, and too many of the wrong screenwriters, Altman prominent among them. Here the major mistakes are sins of omission—extremely vague and skeletal content that is intended to suggest more. As a mystery, *QUINTET* frequently slows to a glacial pace, and is far too stingy with clues. The film's reticence extends to the most basic information. It is left to the occasional, sudden bloodletting to keep the audience awake. Serious miscalculations pile up alongside losers of the game, as when Nina Van Pallandt's skewered corpse is left casually in view for several minutes of dialogue between three other characters. No doubt this was supposed to be a macabre irony of some sort, yet it is mere-

ly ridiculous. Essex does get his answers (and in a rather cold-bloodedly horrifying manner), just when we think he might not. Outside of that limited, unsatisfying goal, what, ultimately, is the point of this whole impenetrable exercise?

Still, the balance sheet is not all in the minus column. Credit Altman with capturing the most uncompromising and fully-realized dystopia ever committed to film. Production notes stress the unprecedented rigors of filming in the remote Canadian north in winter, with all sets open to the elements and temperatures reaching forty below. In terms of sheer physical production, *QUINTET* is an impressive achievement. Leon Erickson and Wolf Kroeger's ruined city-in-the-ice expertly mixes a harsh medieval flavor with the detritus of a once-technical culture, creating a unique place out of time, and one that is thoroughly convincing in its meticulous detail. Jean Boffety's atmospheric photography, Tom Pierson's spare, haunted score, and the costume design of Scott Bushnell all heighten the effect. Lion's Gate's development of its own eight-track recording process has a clarity and realism that rivals the Dolby system.

In the end, though, we have come to expect technical superiority and innovation from an Altman film. Sometimes, there is also the expectation of his peculiar brand of fatal self-indulgence. What we miss is a *positive* answer (in the twin senses of definite, and special/successful/exciting) to the question, "What might one of the world's truly great directors bring to the genre?" It is to be fervently hoped that Altman's *QUINTET* is not the last word on the subject. □







Trisha Noble and Ross Martin.

**THE BROOD** [David Cronenberg] New World, 5/79, color/scope, 90 minutes. With: Oliver Reed, Samantha Eggar, Art Hindle.

**THE BROOD** has something to do with a new form of psychotherapy, along with emotionally-induced mutations—but don't ask *what*. Clarity or coherency are not Cronenberg's strong suits. While he has made definite strides over his first two films in the areas of characterization, and grounding his unbelievable stories in some semblance of reality, his deficits as a writer continue to do him in. Here, trying for "restraint," he leaves us to muddle through drawn-out expository scenes that actually explain nothing. His action scenes are equally inconsequential. The film is commendable in its overall production finesse: an effective score by Howard Shore and superior lensing by Mark Irwin. Acting is more than adequate (another improvement for Cronenberg), although the years have not been kind to Oliver Reed. Apparent rating problems (additional shots of Eggar licking a bloodied fetus were cut) seem strange in that the film is *less* gross, effects-wise, than **RABID** or **THEY CAME FROM WITHIN**.

Jordan R. Fox

**BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY** [Daniel Haller] Universal, 4/79, color, 88 minutes. With: Gil Gerard, Pamela Hensley, Erin Gray, Henry Silva.

If you've been asleep for 500 years, then perhaps you won't notice the similarities **BUCK ROGERS** has to **STAR WARS** and **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA**. Gerard plays Buck as though he were modeling casual wear for NASA, but what can you expect from a guy who's been having sex dreams for 500 years (as we are shown during the title sequence)? Some of the film's stupidity gets so far out it almost becomes charming, as when Buck introduces disco to 25th-century ballroom dancing. However, **BUCK ROGERS** makes trash like **MESSAGE FROM SPACE** look like an epic!

Judith P. Harris

**PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK** [Peter Weir] Atlantic, 1/79(77), color, 110 minutes. With: Rachel Roberts, Dominic Guard, Helen Morse, Jacki Weaver.

It's 1900, and a party of proper English school girls go off to picnic on the ominous "hanging

rock," an ancient geological structure in the Australian outback. Three girls and one adult chaperone vanish while exploring the rock, the unsolved mystery throwing the nearby town into a panic. There is an overabundance of effectively spooky buildup, but no pay-off. Weir explores a stranger-in-a-strange-land theme with the incongruity of the well-bred English girls in the ruggedly unfamiliar outback, and in a recurring attempt to impute a definite malevolence to the silent rock itself. One of the lost girls is portrayed as an ambiguous child-vixen whose disappearance seems to hint at perverse rituals unknown to mere mortals. But with all these throbbing undercurrents, the film needs some revelation, if not a resolution to the mystery itself, at least some final, transcendent statement. Weir's film is only a stylish experiment in mood, an elaborate stage on which anything might conceivably happen, but nothing does.

Lisa Jensen

**PLAGUE** [Ed Hunt] Group 1, 5/79(c78), color, 90 minutes. With: Kate Reid, Daniel Pilon, Michael J. Reynolds, Celine Lomez.

A strain of bacteria meant to step-up the growth of plants instead attacks the nervous system of any living organism. After a few hours, those contaminated begin a frenzy of epileptic-like seizures, as the body begins to chemically short-circuit. An unassuming B-picture filmed in Toronto, which does not attempt to paint a picture of the city-wide disaster (with the exception of one competently-staged shoot-out between fear-crazed citizens and gun-crazed militia)—the low-key approach and emphasis on personal drama is the main pitch. Despite the episodic nature of the subplots, the movie works nicely, and is a 100% improvement for Hunt over his dreadful first film, **STARSHIP INVASIONS**.

Jeffrey Frentzen

**THE PSYCHIC** [Lucio Fulci] Group 1, 5/79(c77), color, 86 minutes. With: Jennifer O'Neill, Marc Porel, Evelyn Stewart.

One of those time-wasting non-films you feel like you should have gotten some sort of prize for sitting through until the end. O'Neill has a psychic gift which, as a child, allowed her to experience her mother's suicide. Now the wife of a wealthy Italian, she has a

Oliver Reed, under considerable pressure to drop the gun.



Putting in time with H.G. Wells (Malcolm McDowell).

second vision, which shows her glimpses of a murder. Without realizing it, she is seeing more the future than the past—possibly including her own violent demise. Something could have been made of this, but with nothing you could call a character around, an unclear and very uninteresting mystery plot, and negligible direction, it's all quite hopeless. Near the end, there's some halfway decent cat-and-mouse suspense and a fair cashing-in on *deja vu*—even a teaser ending. Do we care? Yawn.

Jordan R. Fox

**TIME AFTER TIME** [Nicholas Meyer] Warner Brothers, 6/79, color/scope, 111 minutes. With: Malcolm McDowell, Mary Steenburgen, David Warner.

If you feel that the point of a good time travel yarn is to crack anachronistic jokes, then this is your movie. Perhaps it's Meyer's *homage* to Frank Capra—**MR. WELLS GOES TO TOWN?** When Meyer isn't elbowing you in the ribs with vaudeville routines of H.G. Wells (McDowell) having a Big Mac or hailing a taxi, he's on very shaky ground, because his script is littered with enough plot holes, contrivances and paradoxes to be a joke in itself. We're supposed to take it seriously, though, whenever Jack the Ripper (Warner) walks on and Meyer stabs at generating some suspense or excitement. The action and adventure half of the mixture just falls flat, and fails to counterbalance the humor. But, in its light and breezy moments the film is a delight, particularly Steenburgen's oddball performance as a liberated bank clerk who beds the timidly Victorian traveler. Oh, and it

would be nice, for once, if someone had enough imagination to make one of these things without ripping-off George Pal's **THE TIME MACHINE**.

Frederick S. Clarke

**TOURIST TRAP** [David Schmoeller] Compass, 4/79(c78), color/scope, 87 minutes. With: Chuck Connors, Jocelyn Jones, Tanya Roberts, Robin Sherwood.

A run-down vacation spot inhabited by mannequins come-to-life, a plastic-masked psychopath with telekinetic powers, and luscious, wanton maidens who conveniently stumble into "Slauson's Lost Oasis" after their jeep inexplicably won't start. You don't have to be a dummy to shake off this low-grade exercise in boredom, the futile plot of which never climbs out of the wastecan long enough to be unraveled. Perhaps loony Chuck Connors sums it up best when explaining to one character that the dummies don't really move—"it's all a trick." The intelligent viewer should pick up on that long before the conclusion, and leave this film to those who can either take the unrelieved tedium or have already fallen asleep.

Jeffrey Frentzen

**THE WILD, WILD WEST REVISITED** [Burt Kennedy] CBS-TV, 5/12/79, color, 100 minutes. With: Robert Conrad, Ross Martin, Paul Williams, Harry Morgan.

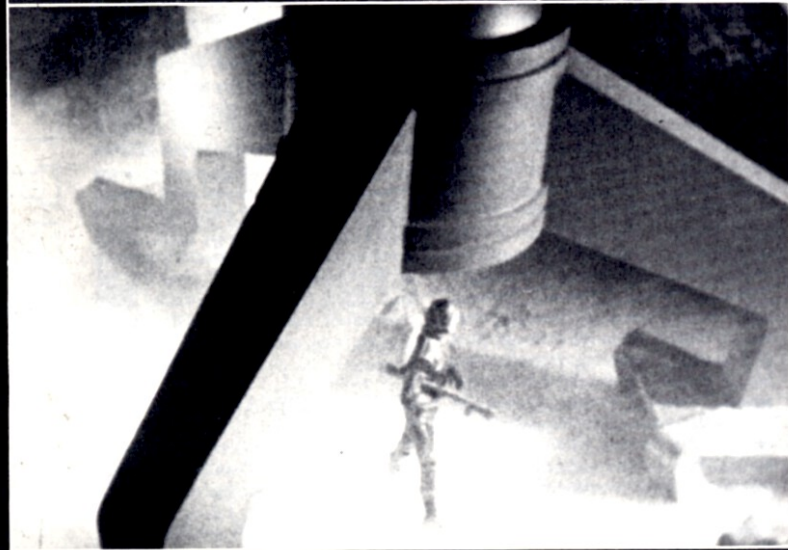
Ten years have taken much of the vitality out of the wild, wild west. Secret Service agents James West (Conrad) and Artemus Gordon (Martin), popular in the TV series that exploited the spy craze during the sixties, return to face the son of their old video nemesis, Miguelito Loveless. The first third of the film involves getting the pair back into fighting shape. We first meet West as he slugs it out with four Mexican bandits, after which he is reprimanded by another agent, "One highly trained man against four ignorant peasants. You should have concluded that fight in half the time." The plot deals with uncovering a scheme to replace the world's leaders with exact doubles, initiated by Loveless, Jr. As the villain, Paul Williams acts more like a spoiled brat than a madman. Although it lacks verve, this TV-film doesn't tax the senses too heavily, and decides early on that it will be no more than mildly amusing.

Dan Scapperotti



# ALIEN

## It! the Terror from



The American science fiction film has discovered blood, and Fox will be mopping up at the boxoffice this summer with shrieks and shocks in place of light sabers and Imperial troopers. But ALIEN is a bleeder. The narrative is a shattered remnant of all those 50s monster flick clichés you've ever choked on, borrowing heavily from IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE. But the comparisons don't end there. Ridley Scott is a brilliant director, judging from the way he's made a visually dizzying film out of a squeezed old rag of a screenplay. Standard "sci-fi" contrivances are wheeled out like old soldiers: a no-nonsense plot that reads like a bad pulp horror story, computer read-outs dancing to an electronic cha-cha, and know-nothing characters without the benefit of a Peter Graves or a Faith Domergue to heighten their obviousness. Writer Dan O'Bannon (working with Walter Hill and David Giler) has cobbled most of the plot and the entire ending from Jerome Bixby's earlier script for IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE. O'Bannon also "lifts" ideas freely from Mario Bava's PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES.

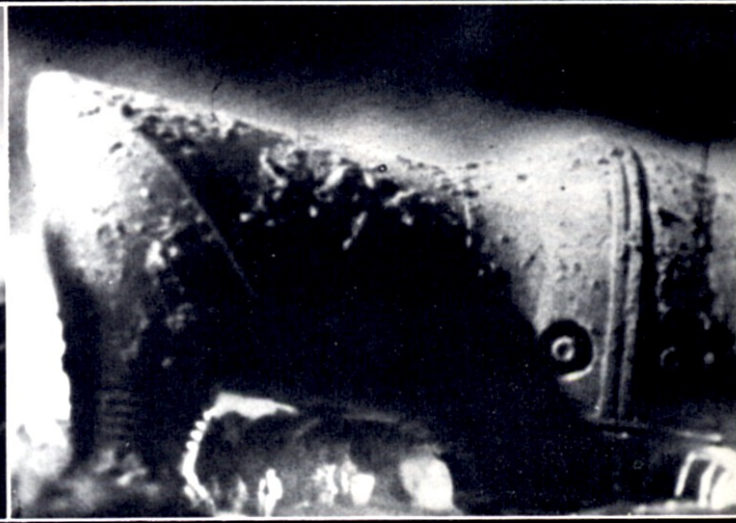
ALIEN does carry an important distinction as far as monster-on-the-loose movies go: the time spent on drawing up a portrait of "average" people on routine assignment in outer space—Harry Dean Stanton, the engineer, is constantly attired in a ludicrous Hawaiian beach shirt; the crew's quarters are cramped and unkempt; the characters (largely through the cast's well-timed ensemble playing) cuss at one another, play cards and land humongous spaceships while talking through homerolled cigs that dangle from their lips—the roots of ALIEN are packed in a clearer reality than were its ancient B-movie counterparts.

A close relative to the story-

line of ALIEN may be the "Old Dark House" whodunnit. But the real mystery here is how a film script could have lasted through innumerable redrafts, as Fox poured millions down the production sink, without somebody putting their hot little hands on the table and declaring "this movie is dumb!" Chief among insults is the muddled motivation for the pivotal title creature. It seems to survive on the sole impetus of destroying other life forms (for food, or whatever). Placing a hideous beast on one end of a space ship, and then having it chase seven actors to the other end, is hardly a good excuse for a multi-million dollar film. Character motivations are a bit fuzzy, too; Ripley is terribly unsympathetic on the outset and, once we've been watching the remainder of the cast get blown away, we are forced to side with her, even though she's a complete bitch. Dallas, the captain, never seems to know what the hell is going on, or what to do, and walks blindly into his death. Is this some sly joke about human foibles? There are some throw-aways comparing the sheer efficiency of the computerized ship, 'Mother,' to the laid-back and uncoordinated behavior of the crew, and Ash, the only interesting one of the bunch, turns out to be a robot. But these loose ends don't tie together. Certainly the human-vs.-machine insight is jettisoned once the Alien goes on the prowl.

Clarity is also missing from ALIEN. How is it that Ripley is able to uncover Ash and 'Mother's' insidious programming and Dallas, who earlier questioned the computer in the same manner, came up with zilch? How does Ash get into the control room without Ripley's being aware? And on an even more serious level, was the Alien of the same race as the crew of the derelict spacecraft, or a completely new species and native of that planetoid? (They are indeed two separate organisms, but that is never made apparent onscreen). In one scene, Ripley takes the shuttlecraft to

by Jeffrey Frentzen



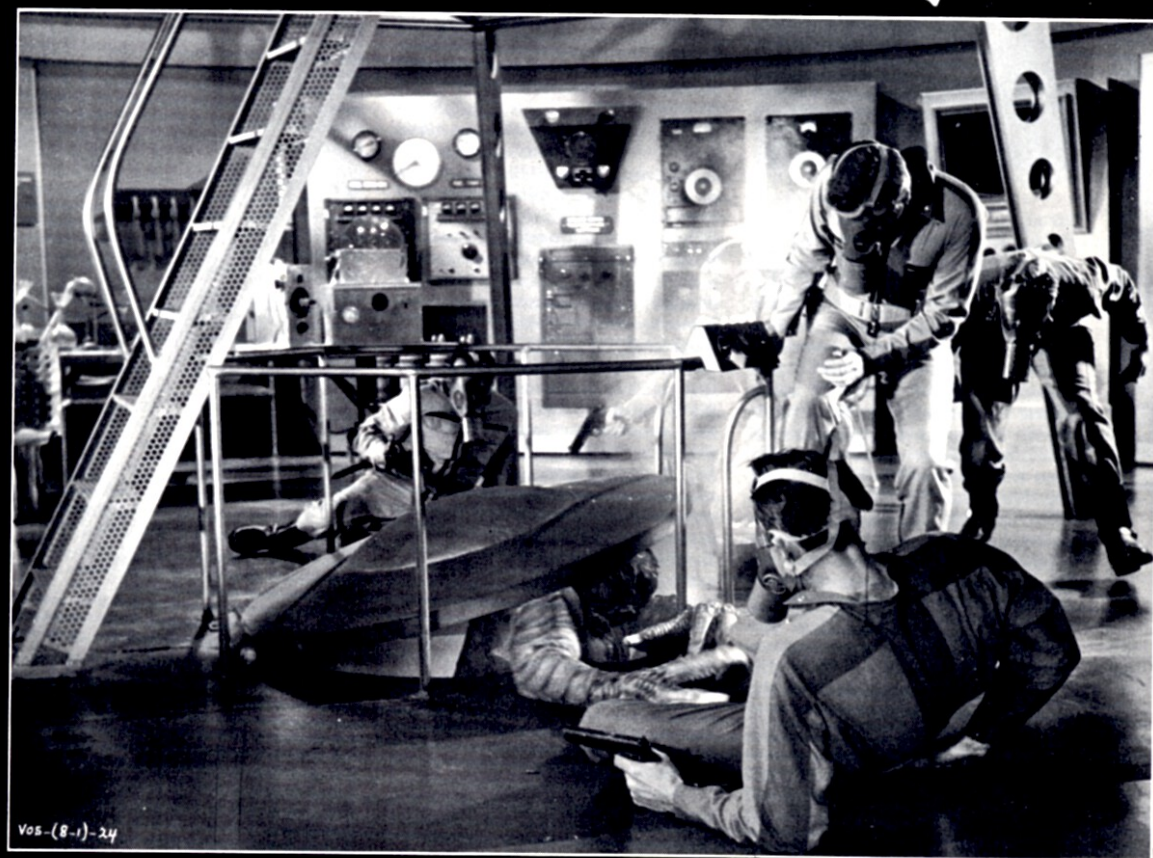


# ... Beyond the Planet of the Vampires

get clear of the Nostromo before the self-destruct mechanism she fixed rips the vehicle apart. But why should she blow it up? If the Alien is onboard the Nostromo, as she believes, what threat does it pose at that distance? The rationale behind much of the film is based on how best to jolt the audience—little attention is given to whether or not it makes sense.

That which is worthwhile in ALIEN is beneath its exterior machinations. Technically, the film is marvelous. Even the miniature space ship models, which are in themselves not terribly impressive, add to director Scott's insistence on mood. Scott has acquitted himself well in ALIEN—he has you by the balls at frame one, and won't let go. Despite the overuse of tight close-ups (I was getting a bit tired of having to look at Yaphet Kotto's blubbery mug filling the screen, with bulging eyes, after each killing), each set up is designed for economy, and all moving shots push the viewer further and further into the nightmare. Most apparent in Scott's work here is the claustrophobic reduction of physical space which surrounds the actors as they die off (made literal in the air duct sequence with Dallas), a squirmy effect which keeps the film's visual quality alive, even if the story is dead.

Among other delightful items, there is Jerry Goldsmith's thoughtful score, specifically a Holzt-like refrain that accompanies the Nostromo to and from the planetoid. The alien vessel interiors are a set designer's dream; a sense of being awed accompanies the numerous crane shots that show them off (John Hurt, at one point, puts forth the obvious, "Amazing!"). The Alien itself is an insectile Medusa that stands quiet most of the time, while the actors make noises like they're scared. But when it does move, as when it uncoils from the ceiling over Harry Dean Stanton's head, it is moderately repulsive. The finest technical detail in the film is the representation of



the Alien in its initial form—the crab-like model, with innards resembling a mass of chicken meat. It's the most convincing depiction of a totally different form of life ever committed to film.

In the recount, though, as hard as it pretends to be new and stylish, ALIEN is just another bloodthirsty shocker, albeit with a classier production than most, and with an army of interesting special effects. Ridley Scott works like a demon to involve us in the violence; and he does, but within the pretense of a highly derivative, formula scare show. □

ALIEN A 20th Century-Fox Release. 5/79. In Eastman Kodak color. Panavision, 70-mm Dolby stereo. 124 minutes. Produced by Gordon Carroll, David Giler and Walter Hill. Directed by Ridley Scott. Screenplay by Dan O'Bannon, from a story by O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett. Executive Producer, Ronald Shusett. Music by Jerry Goldsmith. Associate Producer, Ivor Powell. Edited by Terry Rawlins. Director of Photography, Derek Vanlint. Production Designer, Michael Seymour. Art Directors, Les Dilley and Roger Christian. Alien Design, H.R. Giger. Alien Head Effects Created by Carlo Rambaldi.

Dallas	Tom Skerritt
Ripley	Sigourney Weaver
Lambert	Veronica Cartwright
Brett	Harry Dean Stanton
Kane	John Hurt
Ash	Ian Holm
Parker	Yaphet Kotto

*Above: At the climax of IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE, the ship's crew don oxygen masks and open the air lock to destroy a ram-paging alien. O'Bannon's script for ALIEN borrows heavily from this film, and as shown by the following comparisons, from Mario Bava's PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES. Left: A huge spaceship lands on a stormy, fog-shrouded planet. Bottom Left: The explorers discover a huge derelict alien craft. Bottom Right: Inside is discovered the giant skeletal remains of an alien race. Speculation is that O'Bannon's "script research" may land Fox a lawsuit or two.*







Richard Matheson

## Richard Matheson on SOMEWHERE IN TIME

After a few years of relative inactivity, author and screenwriter Richard Matheson has returned to work in the genre. Besides the upcoming six-hour NBC-TV mini-series version of Ray Bradbury's classic story of solar colonization, *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* [see 8:1:25], which he is adapting, Matheson has also scripted a film version of his own time travel/romance novel *Bid Time Return*, now titled *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* for the screen. *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* began filming May 23, in Chicago and at the 100-year-old Grand Hotel on remote Mackinac Island, Michigan. Stephen Deutsch is producing the film for Rastar Productions and Universal, who will distribute. Directing is Jeannot Szwarc, who first scored with *BUG* (1975) and made a big splash in Hollywood last year with *JAWS 2*. Szwarc had previously directed two not-so-successful versions of Matheson's work ("Big Surprise" and "The Funeral") for NBC's *NIGHT GALLERY* TV-series.

Matheson's script for *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* concerns a dying young man (played by Christopher Reeve) who falls in love with the photograph of a turn-of-the-century actress (Jane Seymour), and projects himself back in time to win her affection.

The central set-piece of the book (which won the World Fantasy Award as Best Novel of 1977)

## Roger Corman to produce HUMANOIDS OF THE DEEP—Sperm Monsters?

It's kind of strange and disappointing to contemplate where Roger Corman and his indie production firm, New World Pictures, have led up to. As a distributor, New World has followed a peculiar schizophrenic policy under which they handle North American rights to prestigious European "art" films (specializing in such items as Ingmar Bergman films), while turning out their own bottom-of-the-barrel, guaranteed-one-week-playoff, drive-in fare. There is no success at New World. *AVANLANCHE*, which came out three years after the tail end of the disaster film cycle, failed. Has Corman lost his touch? The company has announced their production of *UP FROM THE DEPTHS*, to be directed in the Philippines by Charles Griffith (long-time Corman pitch-hitter who penned *BUCKET OF BLOOD* and *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*). It is essentially a remake of Corman's

is beautiful Hotel Del Coronado, a huge, rambling structure located in San Diego, California, that has been scrupulously preserved to retain its late-19th-century architecture (the Del has been used as a location for Billy Wilder's *SOME LIKE IT HOT* and 1973's offbeat horror film *WICKED, WICKED*). However, the Del will not be used in the film version of *Bid Time Return*; "It's too developed down there now," says Matheson. The Grand Hotel, in Michigan, which is the film's new setting, was built in 1867, looks similar to the Del Coronado, yet it's in a wilderness. "There's a town nearby," explains Matheson, "that looks exactly like something from the early 1900's—no cars, only horses and carriages. There's also a complete soundstage that was built by the Moral Rearmament Crusade in the thirties. It was never used, not once. We'll build a hotel suite set on it and shoot some interiors there." Director Szwarc, in preparation for shooting, poured over scores of French impressionist paintings, using them as an inspirational reference for the anticipated look of the film—to complement the evocative storyline and setting with an equally lush and romantic visual style. The director's three-month preproduction time was also spent screening such films as Visconti's *DEATH IN VENICE* and Bertolucci's *THE CONFORMIST*, to aid in developing a continental, vaguely "European" look for his idealistic love story.

Matheson indicates that the script "has been changed a good deal" from its literary origins. Besides dropping the Del Coronado Hotel, the central Reeve character is no longer a screenwriter, but a playwright. Christopher Plummer will portray William Fawcett Robinson, the possessive manager of stage actress Elise McKenna, who was portrayed in the script as rather one-dimensional. Matheson decided to rewrite the character, "to make him more interesting," once he learned that Plummer had been signed. A major change seems to be a conceptual one: Matheson says that the fantasy

comedy-horror *THE CREATURE FROM THE HAUNTED SEA* (1961), this time played straight. The monster constructed for this epic, made of plaster-of-paris, sits in Corman's office in a large box, looking most unwell.

Lately, Corman has definitely made some terrible executive-level decisions. The company is now dependent for its continued survival on a rare fluke like *PIRANHA*, which makes up at the box-office for a year's worth of still-born turkeys. At the very least, not long ago, Corman was a reliable supplier of energetic, venture-some *cinefantastique*, films notable for their subversive sense of humor and sly social comment. But in 1979, we have:

*THE BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, a generic *STAR WARS* rip-off budgeted at \$5 million. Its special effects will be generated by a bargain-basement version of Industrial Light and Magic,

aspect has been de-emphasized, with the romantic elements subsequently given more attention. As Matheson has lately been vocalizing his unhappiness at being typecast as strictly a fantasy-sf writer, this step seems a calculated one.

To enhance the difference in time periods, Szwarc and director of photography Isidore Mankofsky are making use of the split-diopter lens for scenes taking place in the past. This is a long lens which places both foreground and background in complete focus. The technique will be used in conjunction with two different film stocks—Technicolor for the present, and the infrequently-used Fuji stock for the past. Co-starring in the picture are Teresa Wright, George Voskovec and Bill Erwin. *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* is scheduled to wrap-up production in mid-July, with release tentatively set for mid-1980.

Commenting on the newly-completed *MARTIAN CHRONICLES* project, Matheson reports that special effects supervisor John Stears (*STAR WARS*) has finished work on the tele-film's visual effects, which Matheson promises are "incredible and ornate." The writer also points out that he felt personally responsible for wedding the aesthetics of the Bradbury story with the necessary compressions and compromising tight controls of the television script. "I haven't seen the film yet," says Matheson, "so I don't know what they've done to it. But the script certainly preserved the spirit of Bradbury's work. I had to tie its continuity together, of course, but Ray and I discussed this at length and he seemed very satisfied. Both he and his wife liked my script very much." According to Matheson, those who have seen the upcoming TV version of *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* say that it's "going to just knock people out." No air date has been confirmed, but producer Charles Fries is negotiating with the network at present, and inside sources claim it will be shown either late this fall or early next year. *Paul Sammon*

## THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW II: More riff-raff.

*THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW II* will definitely start up production sometime next year. The cult following behind the original *ROCKY HORROR*, plus the high-grossing and incredible, enduring success of its country-wide midnight showings, has convinced 20th Century-Fox that transvestitism is cool, and good boxoffice, too! Richard O'Brien (who played Riff-Raff in the first film) will write the screenplay, music and lyrics for the new film, which will also reunite all of the original cast members. Director Jim Sharman, at present busy with other projects in Australia, will return to England at the end of the year to begin preparation on the sequel.

*Mike Childs & Alan Jones*

## GNOMES Trolls on parade.

*GNOMES* is coming! And CBS-TV is pumping a large amount of production money into the upcoming animated telefilm fantasy *GNOMES*, to be broadcast towards the end of next year. Executive Producer Thomas Moore reports: "We are striving for absolute fidelity to the original story. The show will have the highest budget allotted to any animated hour-long special in network history."

Associate producer Anne Upson explained details of the film's production schedule: "We start our ink, paint and color drawings on August 27. We'll have our color backgrounds sometime before then—the middle of July. Animation, directed by TV-commercial artist Jack Zander, will begin in December."

The script, written by Ray Bradbury, Sam Moore and Maurice Rapf, will be faithful to the book with one essential change. The book of *Gnomes*, upon which this teleplay is based, is episodic, anthological, and its charm lies in a convincing portrayal of a culture. It would be impossible to film a story about an entire mythic race, so a focused narrative was invented. "We have developed a family of trolls and gnomes," says Moore. "The material presented in the book—the entire lifestyle of the gnomes—will be enacted and illustrated by the trolls and the gnome family."

Upson adds, "We have finished recording narration and the actors' characterizations. *GNOMES* will not be a musical, but there is a song for a wedding scene—gnome music, of course. And the musical instruments are acorns! The whole gnome family lives in a house built under a tree, exactly as depicted in the book. And there is a sequence where the gnomes treat animals for illness. They use herbs and other woodland plants as healing cures." Everyone involved on the production is filled with enthusiasm for the outcome of this delightful, whimsical fantasy. Anne Upson sums it up, "*GNOMES* is going to be *FANTASIA* on television!" *Peter S. Perakos*



# STARCRASH!

Do Ray Harryhausen fans grow up and become great animators? Armando Valcauda, the 32-year-old special effects supervisor of the cut-rate Italian science fiction film *STARCRASH!*, used to correspond regularly with Harryhausen, embroidering the envelopes with colorful designs and artwork. Valcauda can recall the best and worst moments in Harryhausen's filmography, with the kind of blind adoration you'd expect only from a fan. But like everything else in *STARCRASH!*, a film that was obviously produced by a group of misguided sf-movie fans, Valcauda's animation, opticals and model work leaves more than a little to be desired.

All special effects for *STARCRASH!* were filmed from early January to March 1978, during a 12-week period in the smallest soundstage at Rome's Cinecitta Studios. Valcauda was contracted by director Luigi Cozzi and producer Nat Wachsberger to execute all Dynamation and optical effects for *STARCRASH!*, with a maximum budget of roughly \$30,000. Valcauda got into an argument with the producer near the end of shooting, when his request for more money was refused, and Valcauda walked off the picture. But he completed the bulk of the work he'd signed for, some of which was of such poor quality it ended up on the cutting room floor! "The animation didn't come out as well as I'd expected," says director Cozzi, who claims that he hired Valcauda by mail.

Valcauda created some composites for the film, including the shots of the "Space Hawk" spaceship, as it sits on an alien landscape while people walk in and out of the hatch. The ship was actually a slide photograph of the miniature (built by Paolo Zecara), projected onto the Dynamation screen. Valcauda also devised the various colorful laser rays seen throughout the film: blades of strong light originating in a moving slide projector, positioned in line with the actors, throwing green and red "rays" across the set.

For the numerous spaceship shots, Valcauda worked primarily with in-the-camera mattes, a process that is economical and uniquely suited to the black backgrounds of outer space. The crew built a huge backdrop as high as the stage wall and painted it completely black. For a starry-sky effect, spotlights were shone through pin holes punched in the backdrop, illuminating the darkened stage. The spaceship models were mount-

ed on monorail-like tracks (built by Germano Natali, who engineered all the explosions in the film), and moved around the stage in predetermined arcs by technicians. To remove the unsightly track (which was in full view of the camera as they shot), Valcauda masked-off the lower half of the lens while shooting the model. After completing the shot, he then *rewound* the film, masked the *top* half of the frame, and shot a section of the star field which would hopefully match up with the top half of the image.

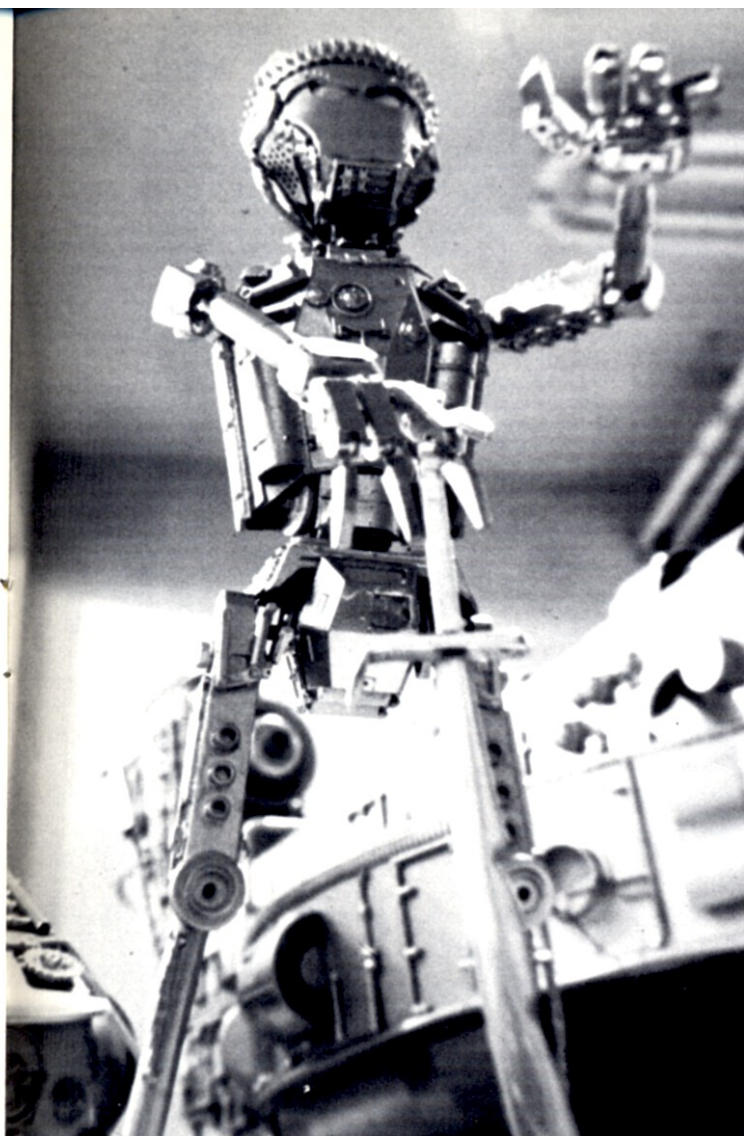
In the stop-motion department, Valcauda didn't fare much better. The female Giant Statue, a sort of rip-off of Harryhausen's Talos from *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS*, was animated in a sequence which was rejected by Cozzi. But before it could be re-shot, Valcauda left the picture, and the unsatisfying first version is what you see in the film. Other animation which could not be salvaged by Cozzi and left out: a swamp monster and reptilian creatures called Vitons, with which Stella Star (Caroline Munro) does battle; a brownish dinosaur ("It looked quite stupid and puppet-like," says Cozzi), which was replaced by a giant crab straight out of *MYSTERIOUS ISLAND*. The animated crab did not cut the mustard with Cozzi, either. So Valcauda brought in a *real* dead crab, fitted it with an armature, and tried animating *that*. This looked better than the previous crab models, but Cozzi disliked the scene anyway, and rather than spend money on another re-take, the whole giant crab sequence was scrapped. Cozzi was pleased, however, with Valcauda's work on the battle scene between Marjoe Gortner and the animated twin golems, spiky-armored creatures with a simplistic design that makes them look a bit like bare armatures.

After Valcauda resigned, Cozzi hired Milan-based model maker Andrea Ferrari and cameraman Roberto Girometti to reshoot some effects. On the "strength" of his work on *STARCRASH!*, Valcauda was hired to supply effects for Ovidio Assonitis' *THE HUMANOID*, starring Richard Kiel, a film from the director that brought you *BEYOND THE DOOR*. □

The Talos-like "Giant Statue."

*Left: The effects of STARCRASH!*  
*Top: An evil golem animation model, one of a pair built for special effects supervisor Armando Valcauda by a friend of his, a postman living in Torino, Italy.*  
*Middle: Rear-projection effect of Caroline Munro battling a giant crab, an effect so awful that director Luigi Cozzi cut it from the finished film.*  
*Bottom: 32-year-old Valcauda, animating a stop-motion sequence.*

by Jeffrey Frentzen





# THE ALIEN FACTOR

People react in different ways to losing their jobs. When he was laid off from a 12-year position as payroll manager for a restaurant chain, Don Dohler reacted by deciding to write and direct a feature film. Titled **THE ALIEN FACTOR**, it includes some credible low-budget effects and dimensional animation. Dohler is best known as the Baltimore-based editor-publisher of *Cinemagic*, geared to amateur special effects and animation filmmakers.

Dohler's first script metamorphosed from a 15-monster comedy, **LANCE STERLING, MONSTER KILLER**, to the less ambitious 3-monster **ALIEN FACTOR** after he and co-workers agreed that "our best bet would be to play it straight and do it as simply as possible." In synopsis, the concept is rather interesting. It involves a Maryland village terrorized by monsters which escape from a downed alien zoological spaceship. The monsters, in turn, are destroyed by Ben Zachary (Don Leifert), a do-gooder alien in human guise. Unfortunately, the story structure is convoluted, and further obscured by the creative and technical shortcomings which characterize most first-time efforts. It's often hard to tell what is comedy and what is drama in the film. For example, Zachary introduces himself as "an astronomer and something of an adventurer."

Shooting began on the 16mm production (shot 1:1.85 to allow for the 35mm blow-up) "rather

by Steven S. Wilson

quickly, and I guess rather haphazardly," Dohler now says. He had seen other cooperative productions flounder from sheer inertia, so he urged an early start: "I'd rather jump into it blindly, and get us committed to it than sit around here talking about it for the next three years." Work was done when cast and crew were available. Expenses were shared, and no one was paid (profits, if any, will be shared). Sporadic shooting ran from October 1976, through an atypical harsh Baltimore winter, to April 1977.

Make no mistake, **THE ALIEN FACTOR** has major faults, but certain aspects of its effects do rise above the lowest common denominator of its ilk (certainly surpassing **THE CREEPING TERROR**'s tent-canvas creature or **SPACE MONSTER**'s electrocuted crabs). The picture sports a couple of acceptable "suit" monsters: the Inferbyce, a segmented, bipedal insect; and the Zagatile, a 7½ foot, clawed, tusked thing with unique, root-like feet. These were designed and built by Larry Schlechter and John Cosentino, respectively.

There is a flawless foreground miniature shot in the film; it shows the alien zoological ship ploughed into a snowy hillside. The ship itself is a testament to low-budget determination, as one end of it (the rocket-exhaust end) is actually an electric toothbrush holder. Embellished by John Cosentino, it is quite believable.

Finally, there is the Leemoid, a dimensional animation beast by Ernest D. Farino (Texas effectsman and former co-editor of *FXRH* magazine). Ray Harryhausen has expressed concern that his fans rarely create new creatures, but instead spend their energy copying his creations. The Leemoid is an exception. Working from earlier designs by Britt McDonough and Tim Hammell, Farino has created a different sort of creature; a sort of giant, toothy pollywog with arms.

Dohler had judged an earlier Leemoid sequence to be unacceptable, and he engaged Farino to re-film it literally *after* the last minute; that is, after the film was edited and the soundtrack mixed. Farino had to match his animation to the timing of existing sound effects. Furthermore, there was extreme deadline pressure for a possible Christmas release (which fell through) and Farino

could work only in his spare time, as he had a full-time job at Dallas' Century Studios.

The first version had been supervised directly onto undeveloped original live action footage, so the live action had to be re-shot. The new footage was sent to Texas. Farino edited it himself, then animated to match. He shot the Leemoid against a black backdrop so that its image could be burned into the live action via 16mm A-B roll printing (an "energy creature," the Leemoid is invisible for most of the film, becoming semi-visible for its battle with Zachary). Working with no projected background plate allowed animation to go swiftly, but it also meant working with no visual reference to the plate image. For shots requiring precise alignment of puppet and actor, Farino rotoscoped key frames of the live action and used the rotoscoped drawings as a guide in positioning the puppet in the frame. In one case, where the Leemoid knocks the man out of frame, it was necessary to rotoscope each frame of the live action.

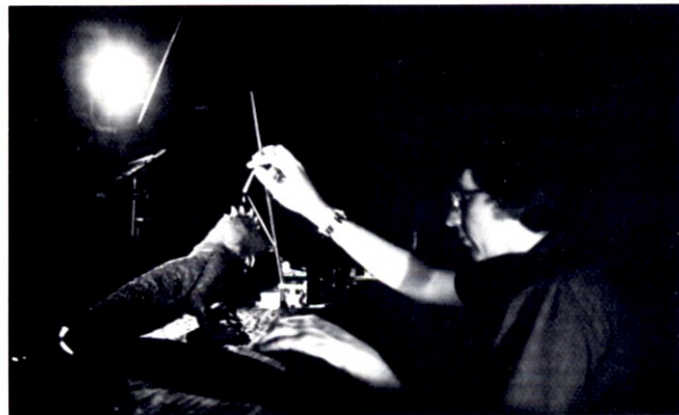
In the final analysis, despite the Leemoid's unique nature, the sequence is all too short and has many flaws which will prevent its becoming any sort of classic. First of all, the sequence is confusing, in that the huge creature suddenly dies after only a few minutes' scuffling with Zachary. Viewers will be left wondering what happened. Dohler admits: "It wasn't really clear, but he was supposed to have used up all his energy trying to kill Zachary, and thus kind of burned himself out." Because the background plates were shot with a Bolex, registration with respect to the animation (shot with an Arriflex) is poor. Furthermore, the live action included unplanned camera tilts to follow Leifert's mimed fighting. Farino wasn't set-up to accommodate camera movement, so he had to animate the puppet to duck in and out, keeping it out of frame during background camera moves. He says, "It all looks very awkward and is a great argument for the effects man being on location, [but that] wasn't practical on this project."

Because the live action was shot on a small hill (in the earlier version, it had been shot on level ground), Farino had to build angled supports for the puppet to move on, in order to match per-

spective. Often the supports had to be obscured from the animation camera's view with black paint on glass, mounted between puppet and camera (sometimes adjusting the paint for each frame). Even so, the puppet's stage is visible in one or two shots. This may be due to the fact that the animation footage was color-timed to a red-orange in early prints of the film. Reportedly, the creature will be printed to its original green color in re-release prints.

On the plus side, the animation in the sequence is notable. Farino gives the Leemoid motion which seems to suit its unlikely physique. It moves with a clear purpose, and dies nicely. Farino comments, "I didn't really study any particular animal while working on the Leemoid. . . I really believe that animating, above all else, should be a very intuitive activity. It's all fine and good to study animals, motion in general, and other animation, but it's too inhibiting to lock yourself into specifically copying actions." The animation took about three weeks, but Farino estimates it was about 1½ weeks' full-time work.

Construction of the puppet was hurried, its armature custom-made in one weekend, the finished puppet in another 1½ weeks. Farino describes the final stages, "The skull was plastic resin cast from a plaster waste mold; the tongue cast over sheet lead for mobility; and, since the eyes had no pupils, each eyelid was simply painted onto the backside of the ball and the entire eye rotated during animation to get the eye-blink effect. The head and feet of the model were sculpted in clay and cast in foam rubber. The body itself was cut from sheet foam, glued to the armature and trimmed to shape. Latex skin sheets were cast from hardened Sculpey texture sheet and glued onto the foam body; all very much a shortcut approach that ended up being somewhat unsatisfactory in this case." Farino also did a "telepathic ray" optical effect for **THE ALIEN FACTOR** and an outstanding title sequence for the film. **THE ALIEN FACTOR** has been picked up for theatrical release by a growing number of foreign countries. In addition, a profitable worldwide television distribution deal has been made with Gold Key Entertainment. □



*Behind-the-scenes of THE ALIEN FACTOR. Far Left, top: the completed Leemoid model animated by Ernest D. Farino for a brief stop-motion sequence. Middle: the Leemoid armature, designed by Farino. Bottom: Farino paints the model after casting the armature in sheet foam rubber. Farino is presently supervising stop-motion effects for THE CRY OF CTHULHU (see opposite page). Near Left: Farino animates the Leemoid in his Dallas studio. Animating the model took 1½ weeks fulltime work, and was timed with the live action footage, a painstaking process that in this case was only partially successful.*



# THE CRY OF CTHULHU



Co-producer David Hurd

THE CRY OF CTHULHU, a \$6 million project produced by David Hurd and William Baetz for Cinema Vista Corporation, has begun preproduction following four years of determined effort to secure financial backing and distribution interest. The script, inspired by H. P. Lovecraft's popular tales of the Cthulhu Mythos, is by David Hurd and Mary Ann Hurd (copyrighted with the consent of Arkham House, the publishing firm that owns all rights to Lovecraft's works), an original treatment of the Mythos (a science fiction series revolving around a pantheon of malefic deities known as the Great Old Ones). The film has the blessing of Arkham House, though the publisher appears to get no fee or profit participation from the project. Forrest D. Hartmann, owner of Arkham House, declined to comment on the financial arrangements, if any, saying only that copyright and matters of fair use in this area are extremely complex matters, because of the way Lovecraft's work has been adapted over the years by other authors.

Says producer David Hurd: "Primarily, we are interested in starting an entire new genre of filmmaking and at the same time make the public aware of Lovecraft. I want to make 'Cthulhu' (pronounced 'Thoo-Looh') a household word." Co-producer Baetz claims that the plot is not a straight, verbatim Lovecraft story, but rather, Lovecraft's mythology and all of his concepts presented in a brand new story with new material. While many authors such as Robert Bloch, Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley and the late August Derleth (who established Arkham House for the sole purpose of putting Lovecraft's stories in hardcover) have written stories and novels based on the Mythos, the actual filming of an original Mythos story is an unprecedented experiment in *ciné-fantastique*.

Wolfgang Glattes, a native German, will make his directorial debut with the film, to be shot in the Black Forest of Germany. Glattes is considered to be an expert on European film production. The producers originally intended the film to be shot in Michigan, their home state. "For a year we looked at this as a low-budget production," recalls Baetz, "and actually raised the money in the Michigan area. We had some bad luck and one of our backers left the state and took his money with him." Then Baetz met artist Tom Sullivan and sculptor Cary Howe. Howe's model prototypes of the various Mythos beings captured a more alien flavor than

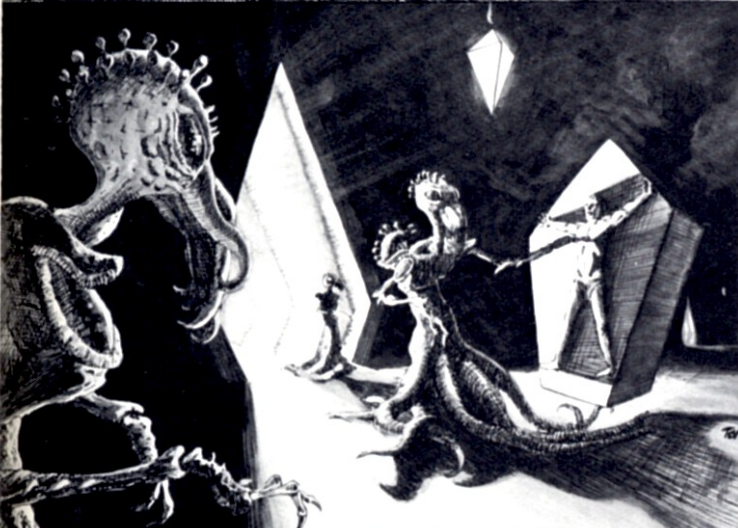
previous artists' submissions, all of whom insisted on designing replicas of Ray Harryhausen humanoids. Howe's designs and Sullivan's graphic production illustrations infused the project with a renewed vigor. "We had a whole new ballgame with Tom's designs," said Baetz. "Without his visual material a lot of people wouldn't have listened to us." The producers went to California to sell the production, but were convinced by several West Coast executives to produce it themselves. "They told us it would be ridiculous to just sell it."

At least \$2 million will be devoted to a formidable array of special visual effects, which may be shot in the Panavision format. There will be a heavy emphasis on dimensional animation, as well as rotoscoping, slit-scan and cel animation. Among the creative crew working on the effects are Tom Sherman, miniature maker who worked on FLESH GORDON; Lyle A. Conway, chief sculptor and designer of 25 animation models for use in the film; Shawn Phillips, slitscan visual effects technician; and Craig Reardon, an associate of Rick Baker who did character design for BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. Special visual effects supervisor is Ernest D. Farino, who will also animate stop-motion sequences. Farino is considering using a rudimentary motion-control system camera, similar to the programmable unit developed by John Dykstra for STAR WARS, for shooting stop-motion scenes. Such a system will greatly facilitate the use of a moving camera during animation, a technique that has been used only rarely in the past. Farino is designing the unit at the cost of \$100,000.

Upon completion in 1981, Paramount Pictures has the right of first refusal for the distribution rights to the film. The producers needed the interest of a major distributor in order to raise money, and Paramount is also providing the use of studio and production facilities. THE CRY OF CTHULHU is to be only the first in a series of four films that define an epic fantasy. Hurd and Baetz are now scripting the second installment while novelizing THE CRY OF CTHULHU script for book publication. □

Left: Four preproduction paintings by Tom Sullivan for THE CRY OF CTHULHU. Top: A character guided by a creature to the mystic city Kadath. 2: Evil entities entrap one of the protagonists. 3: A character being examined by the benevolent Elders. Bottom: The devilish minions of the Great Old Ones.

by Fredrik King





# TIMEWARP

The postproduction effects work on TIMEWARP has been completed at David Allen's Hollywood effects studio, under the supervision of director of special visual effects Paul Gentry. Allen is involved mainly as a consultant, though he has had a hand in some of the stop-motion animation, done for the most part by Randy Cook for the picture. Allen was brought in by distributor Irwin Yablans to "save" the film after live-action photography was finished last summer. The production was already 100% over budget. TIMEWARP was being produced by Charles Band, who had undertaken to start the preproduction work on Allen's THE PRIMEVALS until funds ran out, and so Allen decided to help Band out of a tight spot. "Band was dead in the water when I met with Yablans," said Allen. "Not a single effects shot had been done. A lot of money had already been spent, and no choice remained but to finish the picture, no matter what it cost. In actual fact, it's costing a lot less than it should, by any rights. My studio is being practically given away for these months of work. The services this film has had have been coming in at much below normal professional cost levels." The final budget on the film was set at about \$800,000, and effects supervisor Gentry has turned in a lot of elaborate effects for the money, including stop-motion sequences and dazzling cel animation opticals.

The high-pressure atmosphere of a low-budget production, running over cost and behind schedule, often serves as a crucible for forging new talent. In the case of TIMEWARP, it was an opportunity for model maker Lyle A. Conway's entry into the film effects field. Conway, a Chicago-based sculptor with over fifteen years experience in the toy industry, won a bid to supply three stop-motion puppets for the film, a Wolf-Lizard (see 8:2:77), a Troll (see backcover) and a Gremlin (shown right), other-dimensional creatures brought into contact with the main characters in the story, via the space and time-warping effects of the Vortex. Laine Liska had done designs for the Wolf-Lizard and Troll, and had built a full-size Wolf-Lizard head

by Frederick S. Clarke and Jordan R. Fox

which was filmed in the live-action. These designs, and earlier concepts for the Gremlin by Armando Norte, were discarded and Conway started from scratch.

"I designed a sort of upright, two-legged lizard creature, called the Wolf-Lizard, an Ymir kind of thing. I told them it looked like warmed-over Harryhausen, but that's what they wanted," said Conway, a long-time devotee and follower of the stop-motion field. "The arms jut back in a very dramatic type of move that has almost become Harryhausen's patent. It has the old goat leg that he uses on everything, which is easier to animate than a human foot. It looks exotic, and is something that can't be duplicated by a man in a suit. Harryhausen's cyclops is so good because it was one of the first models to use that, but it has been overused in films ever since, in JACK, THE GIANT KILLER, FLESH GORDON and so on."

The Wolf-Lizard is Conway's least favorite design for the film, because of the puppet's standard stop-motion "look." As someone who would like to see the field strike out in new directions, he much prefers his designs for the Troll and the Gremlin, though less dynamic, because they are fresh and original. He is particularly pleased with the Gremlin, perhaps because it doesn't have to "fight" anything in the picture. The Troll ends up grappling with the Wolf-Lizard. "It was planned to be a *Tyrannosaurus/Triceratops* kind of fight," laments Conway, who complains that stop-motion all too frequently gets mired in a dinosaur film mentality, even when it tries to be something different. "And that's pretty much what it boils down to. They got a slow, dull-witted creature in the Troll, and the quicker lizard creature to fight it."

Conway finished the preliminary sketches of his designs in Chicago and sent them to effects supervisor Gentry for approval. Because the final design for the Wolf-Lizard differs so radically from Laine Liska's original concept, most of the live-action shots filmed with the full-size head have been edited out of the picture. When designs were approved, Conway sculpted each figure out of hard clay, worked around a rough wire-armatured skeleton. The final sculptures were then cast in foam rubber around fully articu-

lated armatures made for the film by Tom St. Amand. Conway put on finishing touches by removing the seams and other mold imperfections, and giving each puppet an evocative paint job. After completing his work on TIMEWARP, Conway joined Jim Henson Associates to sculpt character designs for a sequel to the forthcoming MUPPET MOVIE, and has been set to provide stop-motion figures for THE CRY OF CTHULHU (see page 29). The work on TIMEWARP was the icebreaker, and it has led to a whole new career in filmmaking.

For a low-budget film, TIMEWARP features an inordinately large amount of expensive optical work involving cel animation. Between fifty and sixty shots have been provided for the film by V. C.E., Visual Concepts Engineering, a small but growing effects company, consisting of Peter Kuran, Chris Casady, Rick Taylor, Gary Waller, Jarome Seven and Pam Vick. Taylor and Waller provided lots of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS-flavored visuals of glowing balls of light buzzing on tops of automobiles. The opening shot of the picture shows a lonely house at night in the desert being enveloped and then transported to another planet by the Vortex.

"This shot began as a still photograph," explained Casady, "taken in the daytime of the house constructed on location, without a second story. I painted in the second story, put light in the windows, and painted out a pile of lumber left by the set builders next to the house! Peter Kuran provided the night sky, including the trinary star system going into nova, which dispatches the Vortex that later settles on the house."

The Vortex is depicted in the film as a swirling mass of colored dust. "They sort of passed the buck on that to us," says Kuran. "All we got was a piece of paper with 'Vortex Effect' written on it! I passed the buck again to Chris Casady, who animated most of it." Casady started by creating balls of light which descend out of the sky and dance around the house, linking it visually to the balls of light they had been animating in close encounters with automobiles. When Paul Gentry explained that the Vortex had nothing to do with the alien intelligence behind the lights, Casady switched gears. "There wasn't

much money left," explained Casady, "so whatever had been generated was just added to. I spent four days making a Vortex machine for the shot, which operated on regulated air pressure with colored fluids."

Kuran served as overall coordinator for the V.C.E. work while simultaneously heading up the animation department at Lucasfilm, preparing effects for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. "We never saw a script," says Casady. "And they just kept adding shots for us to do until the money ran out!" By the end of the picture, animators Jarome Seven and Pam Vick had inked and painted 150 pounds of cels, creating glows, halos and various electrical effects. Laughs Casady, "In the end there was a stack of artwork almost as tall as I am!" In addition to TIMEWARP, V.C.E. has provided opticals for PIRANHA, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, and is currently working on director Richard Shorr's comedy remake of BURN, WITCH, BURN, starring Teri Garr and Richard Benjamin, to be called WHICH WITCH IS WHICH?

Jim Danforth has executed some visually striking matte paintings for TIMEWARP, being photographed in composite rear-screen set-ups by STAR WARS' Robert Blalock. "With rear-screen you can blend your background and your painting more naturally," says effects director Paul Gentry. "Both Danforth and Harryhausen use it regularly with good results." Although there is some image degradation inherent in rear-screen work, the fact that TIMEWARP is being filmed in Panavision has been a plus factor. "With anamorphic lenses we film full aperture," says Gentry. "We can stand a lot more degradation and still get a decent picture."

If nothing else, TIMEWARP promises to be an effects treat when released later this year by Compass International. A broad release is anticipated, due to the clout that distributor Yablans has developed with exhibitors due to the success of HALLOWEEN. Although the film has already been announced to the trades by Yablans as TIMEWARP, it may actually see release under its earlier title, VORTEX, due to a title conflict with a pre-existing Walt Disney project about time travel. □

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1) Model maker Lyle A. Conway holding his clay sculpture of the Wolf-Lizard, showing the wire armature base where hands will be added. 2) Conway's finished model of the Gremlin, an unusual pixie-like creature which floats into a little girl's room in the film. 3) The trinary star system goes nova, triggering the Vortex. 4) The Vortex descends to envelop a lonely desert house. 5) The still photo taken on location, used by Peter Kuran and Chris Casady of Visual Concepts Engineering to create the effects shown. 6) An element of the composite, with the house painted out, so it can disappear, showing only the second story which is painted in and not part of the set as built.



## X-rated parody: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE BAREST KIND.

The porn film market, having made an impressive start in the fantasy film market with *FLESH GORDON*, the ingenious satire of serials of the thirties, seemed to have abandoned the field in the last few years. But just as the more legitimate Hollywood production and distribution companies have found that there's money in science fiction and horror, the X-rated film industry is starting to realize that the genre offers a new format on which to hang their traditional escapades.

Donald Bryce is director and producer of *CARNAL ENCOUNTERS OF THE BAREST KIND*, and is releasing the film with poster art which is sure to raise a few eyebrows at the offices of Columbia Pictures. William Margold, the writer of the episodic script, appears as "Dr. Yes," whose lectures on encounters with extraterrestrials includes the showing of four films of alien-sex interludes. The low-budget affair utilizes model animation, but these effects are in execution closer to *GUMBY* than Ray Harryhausen.

At the other end of the spectrum is yet another remake of the Bram Stoker classic, albeit with a difference. Philip and Daryl Marshak, respectively director and producer-writer, have been interested in the Dracula character for some time. They aided in research for the authors of *Lugosi: The Man Behind the Cape* a few years ago. Their efforts to produce a legitimate version of the Stoker novel were unsuccessful, though a couple of the people they approached with the idea are cur-

*CLASH OF THE TITANS* will be keeping Ray Harryhausen working overtime. The mythological fantasy started principal photography on May 14 for MGM, and is loaded with model animation effects to be filmed in "Dynamarama" (another name for the Dynamation stop-motion process). Harryhausen is working closely with director Desmond Davis in blocking out the filming of action scenes, to which he will later add his own brand of stop-motion magic. At the same time, because of a prior commitment (assumed to be with Columbia Pictures), Harryhausen must also prepare the frequently announced *SINBAD GOES TO MARS*, soon to go before the cameras. A source close to the production reports that Ray is working all day at Pinewood Studios on *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, then most of the night at home on preparation for *SINBAD GOES TO MARS*, and is in a state of near-exhaustion. It is known that Harryhausen requested outside bids for the animation work involving Pegasus, the winged horse in *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, and there is speculation that he will assemble a team of animators in order to complete the volume of work entailed in doing two elaborate effects pictures back to back. Producer Charles Schneer, in keeping with



rently filming their own larger budget films. Marshak's film is titled *DRACULA SUCKS*, which he claims was produced at the cost of roughly \$300,000.

The title has been a favorite of graffiti artists for years. The film's primary focus is on the count's activities in and around the Seward Sanitarium, abandoning the European locales. The vampire's carnal attacks on both the staff and patients of the asylum rounds out a thin storyline concerning Dracula's attempts to bring Mina Harker into his nocturnal world. Jamie Gillis, veteran of many porno flicks, is featured as a bearded Dracula. The Prince of the Undead has always been described as a sensual creature, and it was only a matter of time before his public domain-presence was exploited by the skin flick industry. *DRACULA SUCKS* can be added to the growing number of vampire films now in production or awaiting release.

Dan Scapperotti

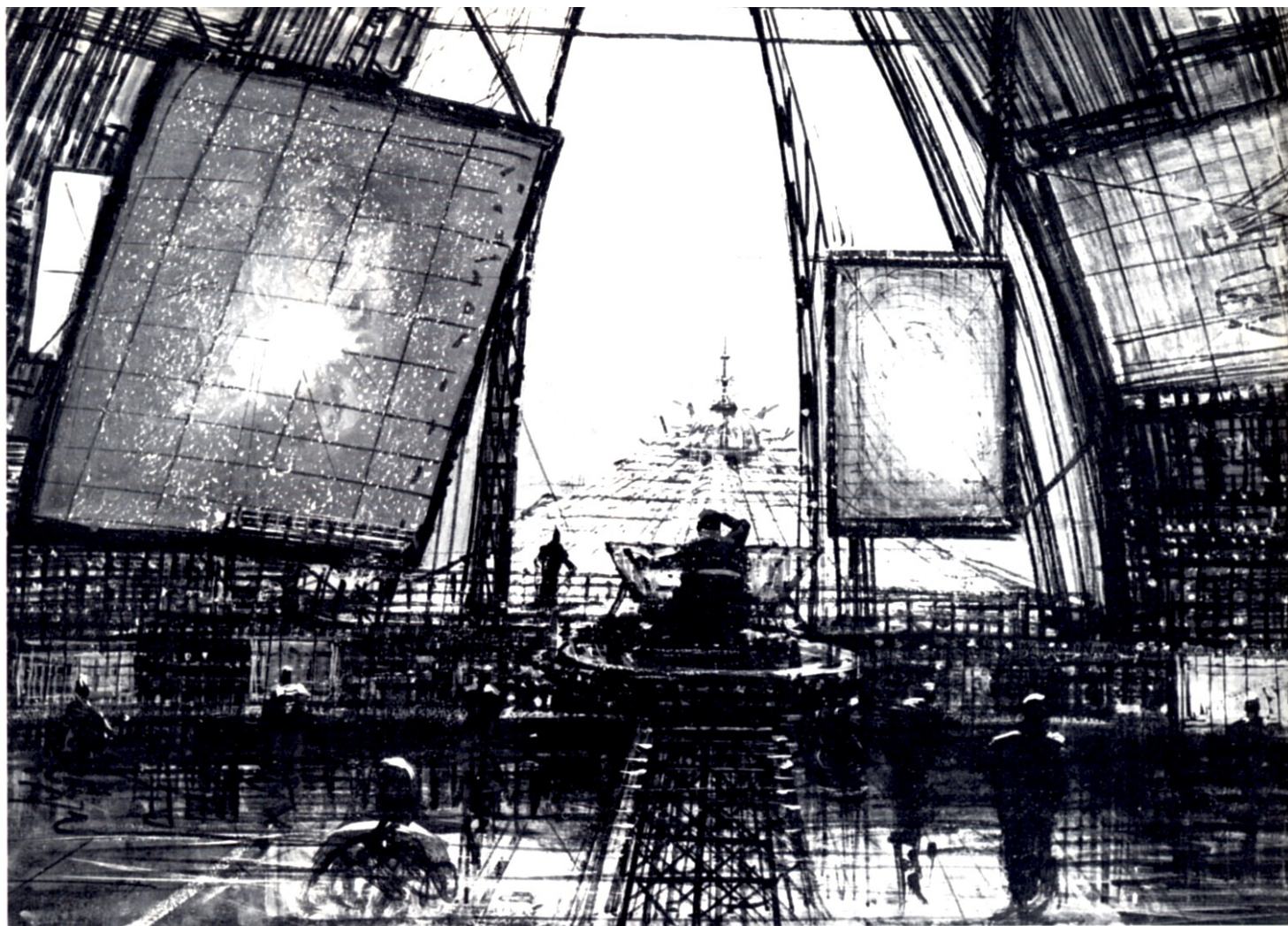
the \$10 million budget for *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, has signed actress Ursula Andress to an already impressive cast which includes Sir Laurence Olivier.

*DUNE* will begin shooting sometime next year, under the auspices of big-deal producer Dino DeLaurentiis. The project was first announced for filming by expressionist director Alexandro Jodorowsky in 1975 (see 5:1:35 and 5:3:32), but that production was scrapped due to lack of funds. Frank Herbert, author of the *Dune* stories, has been signed to pen the screenplay, which deals with the adventures of Paul Atreides, leader of the mining planet Arrakis, and its nomadic inhabitants, the Fremen.

*FLASH GORDON* is currently shooting at Shepperton Studios in London, with Dino DeLaurentiis producing and Michael Hodges directing. The film originally started under the guidance of director Nicholas Roeg (*DON'T LOOK NOW*) who, after spending over a year in preproduction, became fed up with the production delays and quit. DeLaurentiis, whose *KING KONG* didn't exactly grace the genre a few years ago, will wrap *FLASH GORDON* next year, at which time he will go directly into production on *DUNE*.



# THE BLACK HOLE



Maximilian Schell's immense starship U.S.S. Cygnus, as seen from the bridge, a preproduction painting by Peter Ellenshaw.

With what is becoming routine secrecy in science fiction film making, Walt Disney Productions is quietly putting the finishing touches on *THE BLACK HOLE*. Gary Nelson is directing from a script by Jeb Rosebrook and Gerry Day. The plot involves a group of space travelers who encounter Hans Reinhardt (Maximilian Schell), the self-styled ruler of an enormous derelict ship perched precariously on the edge of a black hole. Along for the ride are Yvette Mimieux as geophysicist Kate McCrae, Robert Forster as Capt. Holland, Anthony Perkins as physicist Alex Durant, Ernest Borgnine and Joseph Bottoms.

It's easy, however, to predict that the film will be a special effects bonanza. The crew list reads like a history of Academy Award winners: production designer Peter Ellenshaw, special photographic effects experts Art Cruickshank

by Steven S. Wilson

and Eustace Lycett, and mechanical effects supervisor Danny Lee all have at least one Oscar each. The film uses nearly 300 separate effects shots, including cel animation (supervised by Jon Hale), traveling mattes, and over 150 matte paintings. The paintings are combined with live action using a superb rear-projection process unique to the Disney studio. It allows perfect color and contrast matching and permits camera movement on the paintings. The matte department is headed by Harrison Ellenshaw, who did work on *STAR WARS* and *THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH*.

Disney has also entered the "motion-control" game. Working with the film effects crew, technicians at WED Enterprises (WED creates the Disneyland and Disneyworld audio-animatronic wonders) have developed ACES (Automated Camera Effects System). Reportedly the last word in repeatable-move camera systems, it

also features a new lens with tremendous depth of field, allowing greater flexibility in photographing the spaceship models.

With mystery still shrouding the story elements, a most interesting aspect of *THE BLACK HOLE* is the look of the film as devised by Peter Ellenshaw. The legendary film artist has contributed outstanding effects to countless films, including *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* and *DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE*. He was coaxed out of "retirement" (as a noted landscape artist) to work on *THE BLACK HOLE*, which is to be his last film project.

For this production he has developed a completely fresh concept of space and futuristic technology, deliberately discarding elements which have already become movie cliches. For example, he's changed the standard cosmic lighting. There's no bright, sun-like light source in deep space, he

points out. Neither is the space "sky" pitch black. Thus, Maximilian Schell's spacecraft becomes a huge, eerie, dark shape silhouetted against a background of softly glowing nebulae and stars, an effect quite unlike anything spawned by *2001* or *STAR WARS*. The detailed space ship models also reflect Ellenshaw's fresh approach. They include no plastic model-kit parts, and were assembled instead from thousands of tiny, individually hand-machined pieces of brass, a laborious process requiring several months' work. The largest model weighs several hundred pounds.

*THE BLACK HOLE* has occupied all four Disney soundstages since October 1978. First unit photography, scheduled at a whopping 122 days, wrapped only a few days over that mark. Postproduction will bring the total to 14 months, and the film will very likely come in quite close to its original \$18 million budget. Clearly, Disney is handling the nuts and bolts of science fiction filmmaking better than any other studio extant. Furthermore, and perhaps far more significantly, an all-adult cast, the John Barry score, and hints of a heavier-than-usual script are indications of Disney's growing desire to attract a wider audience (rumors are flying that the film may even cop a PG rating). There is reason to hope that a major science fiction Christmas present from Walt Disney is in the making. □

Left to Right: Maximilian Schell, Yvette Mimieux, Joseph Bottoms and Robert Forster.





SNAILS is a new project in search of a producer, featuring Ray Harryhausen-like sequences designed and executed by the project's creators, Bill Hedge and Nick Seldon. The story concerns a group of people stranded in the Bahamas without a radio who find themselves under siege by giant thirty-foot-long sea snails of unknown origin. Three of the titans attack and destroy a lighthouse after their eggs are slaughtered. Also included are an encounter with a baby snail, and the most fiery ending since MIGHTY JOE YOUNG.

The makers of SNAILS are no strangers to the Hollywood effects scene. Hedge has worked out of Cascade Productions (now CPC) for several years, set up the blue screen and replacement animation for the well known Chuck Wagon dog food commercial, and recently parted the Red Sea at CPC for the Sunn Classics' BIBLE series. Seldon is a model maker currently working with Greg Jein on the Steven Spielberg production of 1941, and has produced stop-motion shorts for The Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Both worked on Jim Danforth's TIME-GATE.

SNAILS is a project that was conceived years ago. In 1963, Hedge met Nick Seldon through David Allen, and a collaborative effort began. "I finished off the story and turned it over to Nick,

by Paul Mandell



Left: Filmmakers Nick Seldon and Bill Hedge shooting a rear screen set-up. Right: The final composite.

who did the first draft," recalls Hedge. "It laid about for quite a while and went through several rewrites. Now it has been honed and polished. I feel it could be a minor classic. It has certain camp values that are timeless."

To date, Hedge has shot several stop-motion composites. In addition to the animation, Hedge built the puppet from an original sculpture by Phil Tippett of STAR WARS fame. Of interest is the participation of Tippett and armature maker Tom St. Amand as actors, filling in as characters from the script (top right, St. Amand is carrying gun). Armed with a harpoon and a shotgun the two battle a 16-foot snail on a windswept beach.

The feature is geared to be shot for \$1 million or less. Hedge and Seldon have designed and written SNAILS to make the execution of the effects as clean and economical as possible, with no limit on the scope and no

compromise on a director's visual style. Moreover, it is no monster-on-the-loose movie—the action is confined to an island and its inhabitants. "The imagery is the most original thing about it," says screenwriter Seldon. "In atmosphere the story resembles STRAW DOGS because the people are under siege by these animals and the violence on both sides is justifiable and not gratuitous."

"We've actually given the snails motivation and rationale," adds Hedge. "In the beginning, the eggs are washed up on a beach and the young are killed, which sort of kicks things off. It's pure exploitation, of course, but we think it's very good exploitation."

"We're shooting for a large market," continues Seldon. "While ideal for the wide screen our story is a flexible one. It could easily be translated to television and is under consideration by producers in both media."

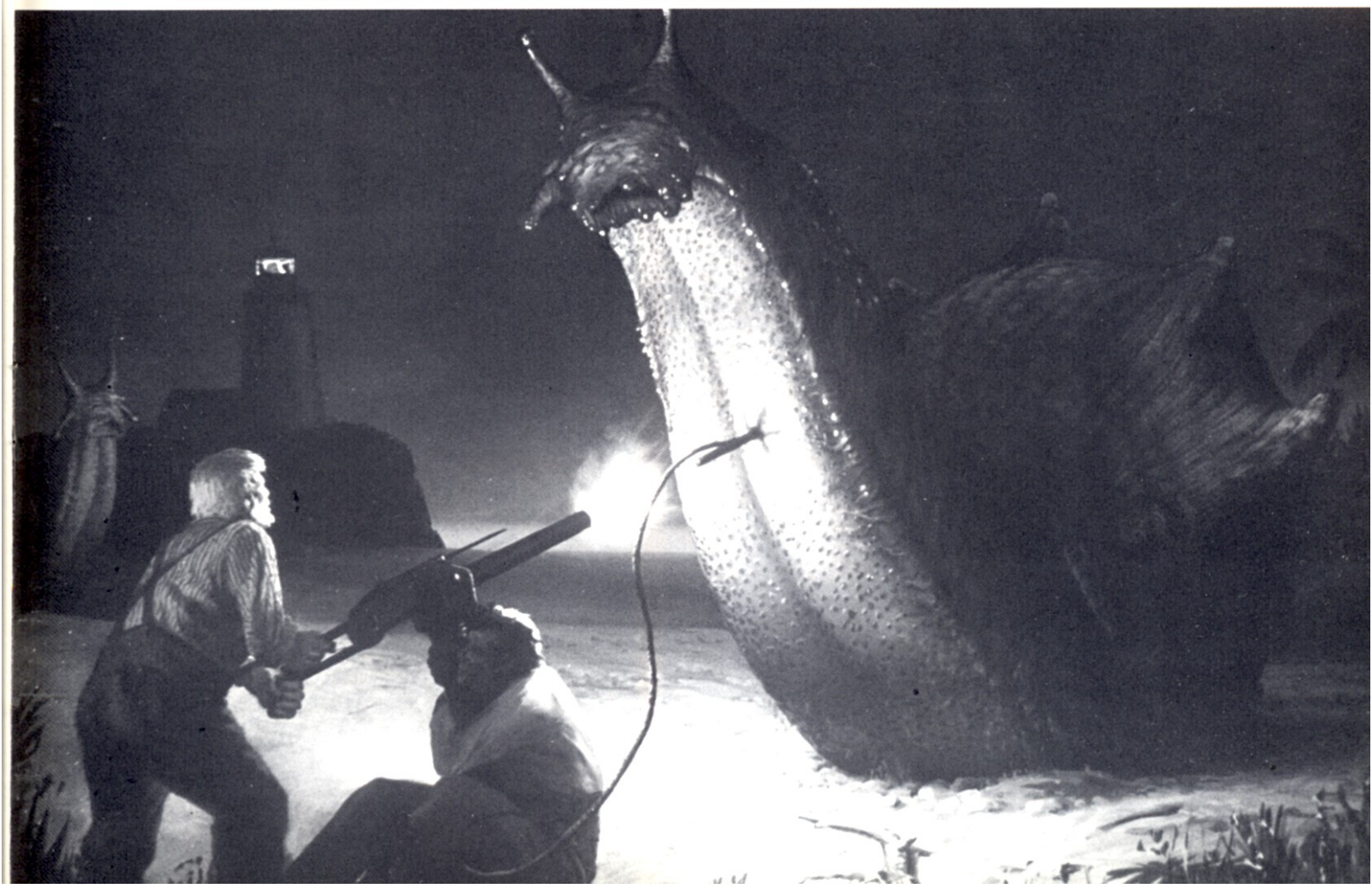
The filmmakers intend to shoot

their rear-screen process background plates for stop-motion effects in VistaVision; dubbing the process VistaMation. "We've got the cameras," says Hedge, "and we're trying to get some projection equipment together right now to film eight perf. Grain has always been a problem in rear-screen and VistaVision should make the effects look twice as good, because the film format has twice the negative area."

But why SNAILS? "It is really a repugnant sort of creature that hasn't been done before," Hedge explains. "And it's a bizarre idea. The mouths of snails are actually filled with thousands and thousands of razor sharp teeth, and their hard shells make them nearly invincible. They're nothing but a giant muscle basically, which means they possess incredible strength. They're slimy and ugly, making for a very creepy film."

Just remember that, the next time you order escargot! □

Jim Danforth's atmospheric preproduction painting for SNAILS, depicting a night-attack by the awesome sea creatures.





# THE LEGACY

Bray Studios, "The House of Hammer," a fitting place to find the production of *THE LEGACY*, written by long-time Hammer scenarist Jimmy Sangster (*HORROR OF DRACULA*, *BRIDES OF DRACULA*, etc.). Paul Wheeler and Patrick Tilley adapted the screenplay from a story by Sangster. With *THE LEGACY*, producers David Foster and Lawrence Turman are attempting to recapture the audience that flocked to *THE OMEN*: "This is our first stab at supernatural drama," says Foster, "and we have been working on it for about a year. The script is not a leftover from the Hammer days; Sangster wrote it for 20th Century-Fox. They had wanted to do a horror film, and had acquired *THE OMEN* and *THE LEGACY* (previously titled *THE DEVIL'S DOORWAY*). They dropped *THE LEGACY* and made a smash hit out of *THE OMEN*. Arnold Kopelson, an attorney and film salesman in addition to being executive producer of *THE LEGACY*, then bought Sangster's story from Fox and told us to produce it if we liked it." *THE LEGACY* is a TEN LITTLE INDIANS-type of whodunnit mixed with a gory atmosphere reminiscent of *THE OMEN*. "Our plot is like *THE OMEN* to a certain degree," claims Foster. "There is nothing new in this genre, and our story has the familiar elements that an audience expects to see, and they feel cheated if they don't get it." Pre-release publicity for *THE LEGACY* is being handled in the same fashion 20th Century-Fox successfully promoted *THE OMEN* a few years ago. A novelization of the screenplay has already hit the book stands, in hopes of generating enough public interest and sales to back-up the film's release and guarantee lofty boxoffice profits.

Maggie Walsh (Katharine Ross) is a talented Los Angeles interior decorator called to work in England, designing a building to house a multi-million dollar conglomerate called Grandier Ltd. With an advance of \$10,000, she and her architect boyfriend (Sam Elliott) settle in London for a working holiday. Upon discovering that Grandier never requested

by Mike Childs  
and Alan Jones

Left to Right: Producer David Foster, Katharine Ross, director Richard Marquand, Sam Elliott and director of photography Dick Bush.



Maggie's services, the couple choose to wait for Mr. Grandier's return from Spain to find out what's going on. On a biking trip through a remote section of British countryside, they are involved in a near-collision with lordly Jason Mountolive's (John Standing) Rolls Royce. Mountolive cordially invites them to stay at his large estate while their motorcycle is repaired. Immediately, five seemingly unrelated characters, all elegant, filthy rich jet-setters (including Grandier), receive phone calls at various points on the globe, demanding they come to Mountolive's home. After all have arrived in England, they learn that Mountolive is dying, and is preparing to leave an heir his powerful "legacy," unlimited wealth and industrial clout. Mountolive, who appeared to Maggie and her lover as an elderly but robust English gentleman when they first met him six hours earlier, is now holed up in a dark section of the mansion, fed intravenously and nothing more than a skeleton. Mountolive was able to appear a younger man to personally greet and escort Maggie upon her "accidental" arrival; his temporary appearance as a healthier man required that he muster all the "satanic" energy he had left to insure that Maggie be the sixth and final heir to his demonic estate. The strain of the transformation leaves him withered beyond human recognition, kept alive by a series of life-support systems.

Gruesome accidents start occurring: a character (Roger Daltrey) has a fatal makeshift tracheotomy performed on him with a steak knife; one is burned alive in a freak fire accident, the corpse then fed to Mountolive's pet Dobermans; a beautiful and capable swimmer is drowned by an "unseen" force. The remainder are slashed, stabbed or shoved down staircases before the not unexpected "surprise" ending (Ross is actually the "force" behind the murders).

The film marks the feature debut of director Richard Marquand, a graduate of television who hopes that *THE LEGACY* will do for his career what *THE OMEN* did for Richard Donner. Marquand sees his first film as an intentional move to repeat the

same kind of suspense that made *THE OMEN* a big hit. "I was excited by the convincing nightmare of *THE OMEN*," he declares. "The primary characters were very real indeed. I'm good at developing relationships onscreen that spark off action—I'm trying to invest *THE LEGACY* with that kind of aspect, that added element of interest that most horror films don't have." Ian Wingrove, head of special effects on the picture, notes that, "The most peculiar thing about *THE LEGACY* is that for everyone involved, it's turning out to be a much bigger project than we all anticipated. What looked straightforward and easy has become quite complicated."

A major problem for Wingrove involved the scene in which a man leans too close to a fireplace and becomes a human torch. "This scene has to be precise to be successful," says Wingrove. "The viewer's reaction to the jet of fire is instantaneous, a good shock effect." Another difficult effect involved a mirror rigged to explode and shoot glass into the body of a nearby victim. Afterwards, the broken glass had to reassemble on the wall. "We're shooting with high speed cameras," explained Wingrove, "as a lot of slow motion is being used. It was initially suggested that we use explosives for a more realistic effect, but you get smoke and small slivers of glass; besides, the appearance is of a definite blowing-out effect. We decided to use gravity, which was my original intention, so the glass can be broken mechanically. In effects work, I've always found the simplest way the best." For a scene of a swimmer (Marianne Broome) unable to break the water due to a supernatural surface tension, Wingrove tried using a range of polyethylenes, picking out the one that gave the best clarity. "There will also be a scene with a mean dog, and I'm a bit unhappy that we didn't build our own mechanical animal, but instead refurbished one made by John Richardson for *THE OMEN*. It doesn't look as good as I wanted it to." Wingrove, who recently also worked on visual effects for Amicus' recent debacle *AT THE EARTH'S CORE*, says of that film, "We were committed to a release date, and we could only do one take on an effects shot even if we'd wanted to do another." In the case of *THE LEGACY*, Wingrove is masterminding gory effects on a larger budget, where cost restrictions are practically non-existent, and there is time to perfect an illusion.

Principal photography began in London and the village of Hambleton in Kent on January 16, 1978. In working on the location shooting, cinematographer Dick Bush explained some of the lighting styles he used to heighten the suspense: "It is quite obviously being lit for atmosphere. When a light goes out on the screen in *THE LEGACY*, the result is total darkness. We are trying to make the audience look into dark corners expecting to see something, and hope they don't." To

Top: John Standing as the mysterious Jason Mountolive, whose satanic legacy is responsible for the deaths of five unlucky heirs. Middle: Katharine Ross faces for the first time that which connects her to Mountolive's estate, a Tudoresque portrait of a distant ancestor. Bottom: A character is fried in a rustic fireplace and then dumped in the backyard to feed Mountolive's pet Dobermans.

achieve the correct backgrounds for Bush's framing and "atmosphere," production designer Disney Jones has given the Mountolive house a picturesque Tudor look, inspired by the style of the Katharine Ross portrait seen throughout the film. "We wanted a positive, clean look in our design, because the characters are rich people in dark clothes, and the house is a sumptuous, eerie place. Almost like Holbiern. I like a film where a character burns up on the set and doesn't burn the set itself."

On writer Jimmy Sangster's participation, producer David Foster claims, "Sangster was never going to direct *THE LEGACY*—we always wanted a new English director. It's an added challenge to go with new talent and fun to initiate it. They will also work hard and bust their asses to prove themselves—it is their golden opportunity." Foster feels confident in the abilities of his actors, especially Ross. "She is so typically west coast-American. Sam Elliott is a diamond in the rough, the makings of a real star. He's strong, macho and a terrific actor." Elliott, whose only other genre film prior to *THE LEGACY* was 1972's *FROGS* ("I don't like talking about that"), feels certain of the film's success. "THE LEGACY has an interesting character development," he claims, "at least my role goes somewhere. And although I'm contributing my fair share, I believe filmmaking to be a director's medium." Roger Daltrey, who plays the rock promoter Clive, is what producer Foster sees as an excellent, offbeat bit of casting, and director of photography Dick Bush agrees, adding, "Everyone likes him. Roger's a breath of fresh air—he knows he's not a great actor, but he slogs on until he gets it right. His eyes have a remarkable quality. They can one minute look warm and friendly, and the next steely and menacing."

*THE LEGACY* is currently in post-production in Hollywood, under the supervision of co-producer Lawrence Turman; it has been sold to Universal Pictures for August release. And what about future projects from Foster and Turman? "Well, before we got into production on *THE LEGACY*," says Foster, "we asked Universal to buy the screen rights to *THE THING*, which they have done. It is not going to be a remake—the first film only used a tenth of the potential that the story had. We have no director or stars in mind at the moment, but we will get the script from David Zelag Goodman (*LOGAN'S RUN*) in a couple of months." □





Arthur C. Clarke

### Arthur C. Clarke's The Fountains of Paradise

Ten years of author Arthur C. Clarke's life went into the formulation of his latest novel, *The Fountains of Paradise*, a book which has been widely publicized as his final work of fiction. "Now that I've retired," says Clarke, "I'm far too busy to work, and can't imagine how I ever found time for such an annoying distraction." Clarke lives in Sri Lanka, off the coast of India, where, coincidentally, the novel's story is set. In describing the genesis of *The Fountains of Paradise*, Clarke comments, "Although I am never influenced by the medium of film while writing fiction, I originally conceived *Fountains* as a movie!"

The story tells of the efforts of two men, separated by twenty centuries but united in their attempt to reach the heavens. In second-century Ceylon, Prince Kalidasa builds a palace on one of the highest mountains of the world, the sacred Sri Kanda. Although his forbear failed, Vannevar Morgan undertakes the same feat 2000 years later, except that he intends to build an orbital tower on the peak, creating a space elevator which would eliminate conventional rocket travel. Like all of Clarke's works, it is a moving, thought-provoking narrative celebrating humanity as dreamer, which is shown to be a great gift and a terrible burden when man pursues those dreams. Currently, Clarke has indicated that even though no firm deal has been made to adapt the book to the screen, negotiations are pending.

When questioned if he would ever write an original science fiction film, Clarke retorted, "I have not written expressly for the screen, and will never do so in the future!" After his involvement on Kubrick's 2001, he is not optimistic that any successive attempts to write for film could hope to compare with his collaborative work on Kubrick's milestone. However, he pointed out that there is little chance for any of these projects to provide a relationship equal to the one he enjoyed with Stanley Kubrick. At this time, he says, "There isn't any 'relationship.' I've never even heard of most of these producers. And I don't know what's going

on." How does Clarke feel about the recent wave of science fiction films? "There haven't been any foreign films here for years. I'm dying to see them!"

The Clarke film adaptation closest to actual production is *CHILDHOOD'S END*. He had been unaware of producer George Litto's abortive attempt to get a film project off the ground at Universal [8:1:31], and had never been involved in any other Hollywood efforts to produce a film based on his novel. Earlier, Clarke had tried to prevent Universal, who presently own the book's rights, from going before the cameras with a script of *CHILDHOOD'S END*. But the author has now acquiesced: "*CHILDHOOD'S END* appears, at long last, to be going into production with Universal and ABC in control. "I am not involved, but producer-director Phil DeGuerre is coming out here [to Sri Lanka] possibly this month [in June] to discuss the script. I'm prepared to devote as much as three days to it, depending on the weather."

Clarke doubts that DeGuerre will incorporate new material he had written for *CHILDHOOD'S END*; whether he will be given credit as creative consultant is also unclear. Clarke's attitude towards the project is decidedly neutral. When finally questioned if indeed he would never write fiction again, Clarke conceded humorously, "I'm sure I will—before 2001!"

Peter S. Perakos

### Alfred Sole's next project—TANYA'S ISLAND.

*TANYA'S ISLAND* is the next genre project for director Alfred Sole (*COMMUNION*/aka *ALICE SWEET ALICE*), which began filming June 11 in Toronto and on Puerto Rican locations. The \$1 million production is described as a combination of *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* and *LORD OF THE FLIES*. A young woman model, involved with a surrealist painter, begins experiencing an alternate fantasy life in which a beast, a character from one of her lover's paintings, rivals the artist's affections for her. The story is presented as a dream, with its later stages taking on a nightmarish hue.

Rick Baker has designed the beast, constructed by Baker protege Rob Bottin. According to co-

scenarist (with Sole) Mick Garris, the creature will resemble a baboon-like man with a luxurious, flowing mane, to be portrayed by mime Don McLeod.

*TANYA'S ISLAND* does recall Walerian Borowczyk's obscure 1976 film *THE BEAST*, which also dealt with human/animal sexual relations, but Sole is not examining the more lurid X-rated permutations of his storyline. "It's not 'let's fuck a monster' time," says Garris, "but let's say that two people on a desert island do more than hunt fish with bows and arrows." Canadian Producer Pierre Brosseau is currently lining-up New World Pictures to distribute the film.

Jordan R. Fox







007 Roger Moore

When he was asked in a television interview if he earned much money from the James Bond films, co-producer Harry Saltzman answered with a smile, "More than I deserve." No trace of such a cynical attitude is apparent in Albert Broccoli, who produced eight Bond features with Saltzman, and who now runs this multi-million dollar enterprise by himself (and elusively sidesteps the circumstances around Saltzman's exit). However paradoxical it may seem from a man who controls one of the biggest filmmaking machines in the world, Broccoli is an idealist, who talks about his films from a moralistic point of view. As a matter of fact, were it not for the huge Rolls Royce which, among the continental compact cars in the parking lot at Epinay Studios in Paris, shouts that the producer is on the lot, Broccoli walks on the set almost anonymously, answering questions with a politeness unexpected from one of the last tycoons. The Rolls may be less a tribute from Broccoli to Broccoli than an expensive byproduct of James Bond and his wonderland.

*You did not buy the rights to Fleming's stories alone, but with Harry Saltzman. It's rather difficult to imagine how two different producers can work together on such large endeavors?*

Saltzman did not buy them. He had an option, and he was not able to put a deal together, and he only had twenty-eight days left on this option. I had tried to option the books, but he had the option, so I made an arrangement with him: if I made the deal, we would become partners. So I put a deal together with United Artists, and he became my partner. Now, I own the rights myself. Harry has nothing to do with this anymore.

*And the James Bond myth is still alive seventeen years later. But it has undergone many changes: the character, for example, is much more humorous.*

Yes—what's wrong with that? Nothing. But could you anticipate that the books you were interested in would develop into such a popular creation?

It's the public. You must realize that the series started close to eighteen years ago. And during that time, changes have taken place in the world, in the United States, in France, in England. This change is necessary. As we pro-

by Frederic Albert Levy

longed the series, we saw the change was that nowadays people want to laugh. We are not making a comedy, but a fantasy. It's a fantasy with a lot of realistic elements. Many things have happened in the early Bond pictures that have really ultimately happened. That fantasy is like H. G. Wells; a lot of Wells' fantasies came to life. People were put on the moon, as he had predicted. So nothing really changes too seriously except that towards the trend, we find that we have to put more humor in our "fantasies," a little more action, and we make the films a lot bigger. And we go into space, like MOONRAKER.

*What is the basic element that makes your films so successful?*

The basic element is in prolonging a series of films until we have built-up a huge fan organization, a great audience, in all countries, except Russia, its satellite countries, and China.

*James Bond is not familiar to the Soviets?*

Their explanation is that their audiences are not ready for it yet, but they have approached us in discussions of possibly making a film financed there, or perhaps with China. But the point is that we are different from other films: we have a built-in audience, out there, willing to see Bond, every eighteen months, and up to now that has been a success.

You see the requirements for that audience on the screen: we put in a lot of production, a lot of value, and our films keep getting bigger, hopefully better. And a change took place from Sean Connery to George Lazenby, a good change, and now Roger Moore, who is the most popular one of all, as THE SPY WHO LOVED ME did twice the business of any other Bond film.

*How did you manage to stick to this sort of ideal, and bring something new to each new film?*

It's hard work to get different stories, ideas, and work with these plots. Times have changed since Fleming wrote his books.

*What is your exact role in making the film?*

The people that know me know that I am always there, from the beginning, from the film's conception. I work with the writers and the director. I don't think that I am better than other producers, but I think my contribution is creative to the story and characters. The technicians' contribution is larger than mine, but I stay with the picture all the way through, until I go to the opening. Then I start all over again, very shortly thereafter. I don't know why, but I'm driven to it!

*What will you do after MOONRAKER?*

There will be another James Bond film, hopefully. But I really don't know which one yet. If the audience wants it, there will be another. And we'll know if they want it, just by their reaction, which I hope will be a very good reaction, because MOONRAKER is something we are all working on very hard. Our own reaction to the film is very good at this stage.

*Do you produce movies other than the Bond's?*

I don't have time! I used to produce other films with Irwin Allen. He had an independent production company in London. Years ago, we used to produce five films a year. But we're doing bigger films now, and it's difficult for me to produce anything other than James Bond films.

*What are your feelings toward the Bond character?*

He's a character that has motivated the industry into a lot of action. Some people have tried to make pictures similar to ours, and probably someday they'll make them a lot better than we do. I find it flattering, very flattering to be copied.

*Do you think the cinema has helped mankind progress?*

We have had crises, problems in our business, but motion pictures are still the best form of entertainment, and always will be as long as we make good films. The camera is quite an actor; it really shows all the good things and bad things we do on the screen. That eye of the camera is magic. It stuns people or it entertains people all over the world. It brings tragedy to the screen, it brings hope, and it brings a lot of criticism, too, of us. I think in some ways the cinema has progressed mankind. I think in some ways we haven't been too good, either. We could have been a little more cautious. I can't give you a specific example, however many there are, but in order to excite our viewers, sometimes we may be a little careless. But I know at least we try to make parentally-guided pictures. So far we have had no criticism from the parents, and I hope we don't.

*You pay much attention to children, don't you?*

Yes, we do. It's because of the youngsters that we brought "Jaws" into the new film. They wanted it, so we brought back Richard Kiel. We do listen.

At first, one can't help being surprised at the way director Lewis Gilbert seems to reduce everything in the MOONRAKER script to a very human dimension. The Ken Adam set for the space station is so carefully designed and so lavishly made that, when inside the set, if you'd only manage to be oblivious of the profoundly bored look of the extras, and of the sound and fury of electricians, woodworkers and other mechanics, you could almost believe you were in a real space station. Almost. Because one little detail tells you that this is no real space station. Sitting in a corner, disregarding all the agitation around him, director Gilbert is quietly sipping his tea. However international the atmosphere on the set, he does not forget that he is English. His work on the Bond films, including THE SPY WHO LOVED ME and YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE, is all but dwarfed by the technology of Adam's production design, with its reliance on exotic gadgets and massive sets, yet Gilbert manages to focus on the human drama and not the fantastic situations. And this human view is confirmed by a real politeness: though he had not been

*Top: Jaws (Richard Kiel) gives Bond (Roger Moore) a hand. Middle: Effectsman Derek Meddings' miniature space shuttle, ready for launch and rendezvous with Drax' orbiting space station. Bottom: On the set with (left to right) director Lewis Gilbert, producer Albert Broccoli and Moore, decked out for scenes in Rio de Janeiro.*

informed that somebody wanted to interview him, I did not have to wait more than fifteen minutes until he came to talk to me. He had finished his tea, though.

*When you are directing James Bond pictures, aren't the high technology and special effects a double-edged sword? I remember Terence Young, after doing THUNDERBALL, had complained that he was asked to do the job of a super-engineer much more than that of a film director.*

I don't think that is true for me. If you saw THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, the big thing about that was, I think, that the characters, like "Jaws," and the girl, were still characters in spite of being in a very large, fantastic production. And I think that I am able to tie those two things together.

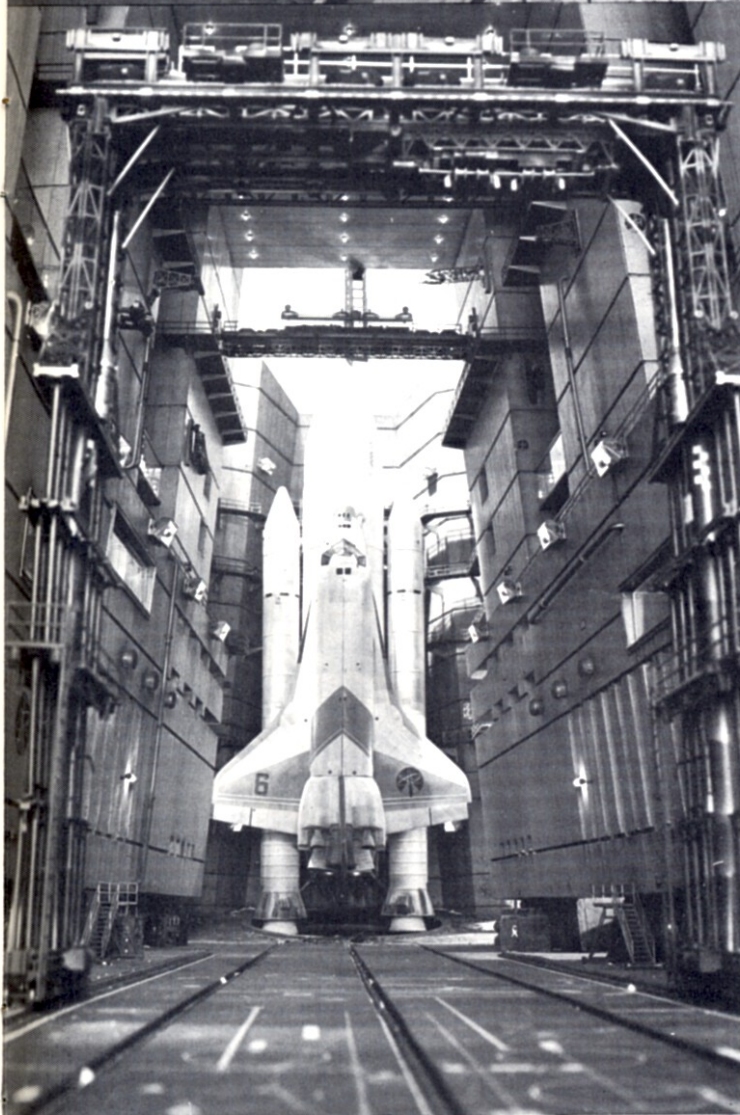
*You've had the chance to direct both Sean Connery and Roger Moore as James Bond.*

I think that probably Roger is nearer to the Ian Fleming concept of Bond. Sean wasn't much like the Bond of the Fleming books. But he made it in his own image, as it were, which was quite right, because the films were very successful. So he was acceptable as James Bond to a lot of people who hadn't read the books. But Roger Moore is closer to Fleming, except that now the films with Roger have more humor, much more comedy in them than the original stories and films do. Also, the women's role is very different, because in the last seventeen years women's liberation has taken place in a big way. Therefore, in a modern James Bond film, the women do not faint at the sight of James Bond as they did in the originals. They have a more demanding role in society, and all that has changed in the last ten years—post-Terence Young, you could say. If you look at the early films, and at the way they are now, you'll notice a tremendous difference. The James Bond of Roger Moore is a very different James Bond from Sean Connery's.

*Do you participate in writing the scripts?*

Well, again, these plots have to change, because Fleming's novels were written twenty years ago. If you take a film like MOONRAKER, and you read the book on which it was based, it has nothing whatsoever to do with space; and Fleming knew nothing about space at the time; they had not even launched a man into orbit. The films now are going to be very, very different from the books, whereas when Terence Young was making the early films, Fleming was still alive, and the books were comparatively re-





cently written. We don't use the books at all, really, for they have no possible value in today's society. We try to make space as it is today. I mean, we are not trying to compete with STAR WARS. We are saying if the U.S. government wanted to, this is what they could do. They could put a space station like this into space. It's not fantasy, it's not fiction. It is what *could* happen. I'm not saying that it would happen, but it could happen.

*Would you call this a realistic film?*

Yes. It's not likely to happen, because it would be difficult for an individual to construct a space station, but *physically*, and in terms of technology, all the things in this film are feasible. That's what makes it different from a film like STAR WARS or 2001 or CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND—they are all science fiction fantasy: it could happen, but there is no documentary evidence that it could or will happen. In MOONRAKER, everything that happens was documented: we know there is a space probe, we know it goes into orbit, we know you can build space stations, we know a person can live in space. All that is possible to do, and I think that is the difference between *this* film and something like STAR WARS. Nobody is dealing with the reality of space today.

*Do you think that one of the major reasons for the success of the James Bond films is that they are at the same time realistic and incredible?*

That's right. We got big cooperation from NASA, who told us everything that is possible to do in space. How people can be trained to live in space; how, at the space station, you don't have to be weightless because, by rotating the station around Earth, you can simulate gravity.

*How long did it take to prepare all that research?*

About a year.

*How were you contacted for your first James Bond film, YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE?*

I'd just made a film called ALFIE, which was a big success, and Cubby [Broccoli] and Harry Saltzman approached me and said, "would you like to do the next James Bond film?" I said I didn't think so, because after all there had been four films already; why would I want the fifth? Then Cubby said something to me that was fascinating: "You can't turn it down, because you have the world's biggest audience waiting to see what kind of a mess you make of it." And it's true, really. For very few films do you know that a very large audience is going to see it, good or bad.

*So it is a challenge for you.*

MOONRAKER was a challenge inasmuch as the last film, THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, was the biggest success of all the Bonds. So when they asked me to direct the new one, I had to decide, "could I top the last one?" and there is the challenge.

*What is the basic element in the James Bond series that draws the crowds?*

I think it's the feeling that they are watching some form of reality, and yet you still have to look at it with disbelief. It is fantasy, and yet it is reality, and I don't think any other film has that mixture. If you watch STAR WARS, it is fantasy, and that's that. But when you see a James Bond film, you are asked to look at things which are taking place in the real world: he drives a car, he's got girlfriends, he is doing things which everybody in the world can do. But he is thrown into incredible adventures which could happen, though it's not likely to happen to you or I.

*So the identification is easy?*

Yes. And I think now, as the girls have bigger roles, women identify too, because they would like to be alongside James Bond, to go through these incredible adventures, and live in those sumptuous apartments. It is a kind of dream-life, isn't it, which we're all allowed to participate in. We know he's not going to be killed; he's going to come out alright in the end.

*Since you are talking about the characters, I am surprised you are talking about the women, but not much about Bond. What do you think of this guy?*

As I said: over the years, the character has changed. And he's still an enormously attractive man, funny, witty, somebody that every girl would like to date, or would like going along with. And because there have been ten pictures, we don't have to spend a lot of time explaining who James Bond is. Immediately the film starts, and he is kissing a girl, and everybody laughs—that old James Bond, he's still up to his tricks. In another film, you have to spend a lot of time and dialogue saying who is this man and who is doing these things. The character of Bond is set. You can't change him because, as I said, they don't want to suddenly see him crying because he shoots somebody, or—

*Yes, but James Bond in YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE was different from the previous ones, and particularly because I think you made him more human than he was before.*

Yes, if I have made a contribution to Bond, it is that. And in that film with Sean, I tried to make him show a little compassion when the girl dies. In a way, that's a good thing over the years to show because, as the years go by, people want to see Bond more as a man than as a superman. James Bond must be rooted in

*Hugo Drax' Super Race.*







Ken Adam

reality, and reality is that even Hitler used to go around kissing children. So you must have a hero with some redeeming features. He can't be killing people all the time in a film which is now a family film. In the early sixties, they weren't family films. Now, children love these films. Everybody goes to see them, peasants in the middle of South America or Hong Kong, sophisticates in London, Paris or New York; and it's interesting that there is a huge spectrum of society going to see them—from five year-old children to ninety year-olds.

*So what is your treatment of violence in these films?*

There is violence, but you don't believe it. You never see blood in a modern James Bond. You might see him kissing a girl, and if you know what's going on, you assume that he's been to bed with the girl, but we don't show anything like that because we have a very enormous audience of young people. I have never had so much satisfaction, in making films, as in working on a Bond film. It's wonderful to see an audience enjoying themselves, seeing a family all enjoying the same thing. There is no message in a Bond film, no deep psychological thought, that's not what the film is all about. If you want to see that sort of thing, then you go and see *THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD*, which is a realistic spy film. We are in a different league, which we should not, really, step out of, because obviously the films have been very successful.

*How much control do you have on your films apart from the actual shooting?*

I'm there from beginning to end. That's why I like working with somebody like Cubby [Broccoli]. Normally I don't work with the producer, but I like working with Cubby. We discuss things—editing, music, etc.—we don't agree on everything, but basically we see the film eye-to-eye. Sometimes he wins, sometimes I win. But we respect each other. We are doing it for the good of the film.

*Will you do another James Bond film?*

I don't know. I've done two on end. I'd like to do a love story, a smaller kind of film.

Creation is the business of production designer Ken Adam. His work in the cinema is definitely not restricted to Bondland. He is proud to have received both the British and American Academy

Awards for such divergent films as *THE IPCRESS FILE* and *BARRY LYNDON*. His contribution to *MOONRAKER*, the vast and unusual sets commonly associated with James Bond features, are the highlight of this expensive production. The sense of wonder involved in appreciating Adam's work on this film all contributes to the impression that it all, as Lewis Gilbert put it, "could happen, even though it perhaps would not happen." Something we might call a well-designed madness.

*You are credited as 'production designer.' Are you satisfied with the term? Does it define your work properly?*

The term is a relatively new one, which came about after the War. Until then the term in use was "art director." But I make a difference between these two terms; now I have art directors working for me who deal with more practical aspects, which gives me more time to deal with the complete visual aspects of a film, not only the sets. And I don't have to worry possibly as much about the everyday type of organization or finishes on the set. I leave that to my art directors. I still supervise it all, but it gives me a little more freedom to deal with the visual design of the film. It was difficult for me to work in the French studios on *MOONRAKER*, purely from the point of view of space limitations. But much to my surprise, we found some excellent craftsmen, people who had been brought up in the old school of cinema in terms of set construction. And even when I came here with new ideas such as the space station, they took up the challenge admirably well, and in terms of set finishes they were superb. But the big problem was that we had to work, because of this lack of space, in three small studios. I had to design my sets to fit the space, which was a limitation; but at the same time, I think it came off alright.

*Do you mean that the space station made in Epinay Studios would have been larger in another studio?*

It might have been somewhat larger, but even if it had been, you would have needed even more room to film it. But Epinay was the largest stage in Paris, and in a way the trapeze shape of the stage fitted the concept of my design.

*How do you feel about being able to say, 'I want a space station built,' and then get a space station built?*

In Bond movies, the spectacle value of the decor and the action sequences have proved to be very important. So the producer and the director give me a free hand, which is very nice. At the same time, I often find that as a designer you can go overboard. And it is therefore very important that you have somebody else, like the director, who has an objective approach, to attend, and just reassure you that what you are doing is correct and not completely mad.

*So you don't agree, for exam-*

*ple, with the critic who declared that, in YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE, the real director of the film was production designer Ken Adam?*

I don't agree with that. On a Bond film, my contribution is possibly more important than on other films, because once we had stopped using the original Fleming books and stories, the plot aspect of the film seemed to have become less important—it's now always the villain-who-wants-to-destroy-the-world and so on. One has become more interested in the visual elements, the spectacle value. Obviously, that is more in my field, but that does not mean I direct the film. The director is very essential to a Bond film. He has to be very professional, because it's become so complicated, there are so many units filming all over the world. Without that professional director, it could be an absolute disaster. It has become a very big logistics problem, because I find now that my department may have to serve up to five units throughout the world. Everything has to be worked out carefully beforehand.

*How did you get involved with the Bond series?*

I did the first Bond film, *DR. NO*. Both Saltzman and Broccoli knew me—I'd designed a film for "Cubby," *THE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE*, with Peter Finch. *DR. NO* was a very low-budget film, it cost about one million dollars, and my sets came to \$20,000! I was very reluctant to do it; the script did not appeal to me; I thought I should not be involved with this sort of film. But then it seemed to give me an opportunity to let myself go, to release myself completely from the rigidity of previous films I had done. But here, the loose story gave me the chance to go a little wild, slightly larger than life, and likely ahead of time, and I enjoyed it. Then Kubrick had seen my work on *DR. NO*, and asked me to design *DR. STRANGE-LOVE*. And one of my assistants did *FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE*.

Afterwards, I did *GOLDFINGER*, *THUNDERBALL*, *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*, *DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER*, and *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*. But I normally find that in between Bonds I do four or five other films. So I did not do *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*, although I set-up the locations for it initially. I didn't do *THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN* or *LIVE AND LET DIE*. For me it's important to do other films, like *SLEUTH*, *BARRY LYNDON* or *SALON KITTY*. It's almost like therapy for me, and then to come back to Bond.

*But now you don't have to just go wild, you have to go wilder and wilder. So the madness should be complemented by some reasoning?*

Making James Bond films, at least lately, has become a sort of fair, democratic debating society, where even the prop man might come up with a great idea. Of course, as we now normally start off from a location shoot; the writer is present, the director and

*Top: Industry in orbit—Hugo Drax' mammoth space station, designed by Ken Adam. Middle: Stainless steel interior of the space station, constructed at Epinay Studios in Paris. Bottom: Roger Moore and friend in a futuristic tube corridor, actually the Centre Beaubourg, a Parisian cultural complex.*

the producer, and myself too. A lot of decisions are made then: you see something like the Carioca in Rio De Janeiro, and you think, wouldn't it be nice to use that setting in a chase sequence? So the first contribution is made by this team going out on location. But ideas keep getting changed, and the good thing about a Bond movie is that anybody is allowed an opportunity to express their opinion.

*Is your presence necessary during the shooting, for I assume that everything is very carefully planned and set up?*

Yes, it is carefully planned, but it still needs a certain amount of supervision. I don't ever like to walk away, even when shooting a relatively unimportant set, because it may well be that the unimportant element takes up three minutes of screen time. And if it's bad, I squirm in my seat, blaming myself for not having paid more attention to that.

*How many different sets are used for MOONRAKER?*

With studio and location interiors, we had something like fifty-two sets. We had to make more use of location interiors on this picture, because of the limitation of studio space. We used the *Chateau of Vaux-le-Vicomte*, we also used *Guermantes*, another chateau. In Venice, we shot quite a lot of interiors, and I also shot at the Beaubourg Centre in Paris, which impresses me tremendously; I felt it was like a Bond set. It's the first Bond I have been involved with where we have used so many location interiors. At Pinewood I have eighteen stages, but here I was forced to use location interiors, which I could not have had the time or space to build in the French studios.

*What is your impression of the Bond features?*

I think that the important thing is if you can keep an audience continuously entertained, whether by action sequences—I don't think there's any literary *oeuvre* so far!—or stunts, or background and setting. And the character of Bond is obviously the main catalyst of it all, the common denominator.

*Do you know what you will do after MOONRAKER?*

I have been offered many science fiction scripts which, at the moment, I haven't been all that interested in. One gets a little more choosy, the older one gets! I would like to get involved in the producing end of filmmaking. I'm no businessman, I'm not interested in making deals, but I am strongly interested in the creative production aspect, that is, casting, script, direction, etc. I might possibly do that sort of thing in the future. □



I hasten to send you and your staff congratulations for the extraordinary story regarding FORBIDDEN PLANET [8:2:4]. What you've done is a remarkably unique and imaginative study that is a complete book and history. It would be comforting if I could tell you that from the start I knew FORBIDDEN PLANET would become a forerunner of the cult motion picture. However, I only knew as it developed, that it was going to be a special and different kind of picture. My thanks to the many people, living and dead, who gave so much to the production.

DORE SCHARY  
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You might be interested to know that yet another document exists that adds even further dimension to the story of FORBIDDEN PLANET. It is the novelization of the screenplay published first by Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, and later in paperback by Ballantine Books. The novel, by W. J. Stuart, is an interesting piece in itself, told in the first person by Ostrow, Adams, and even Morbius, and is quite apart from the usual hack efforts that characterize movie tie-ins. Of necessity, film novelizations are normally derived from early versions of the scripts, which frequently become changed during the course of production. However, because of publishing deadlines, those changes are often not reflected in the novels. The fact that the FORBIDDEN PLANET book was published in January 1956, a full three months prior to the film's release, suggests that it had been written months before.

Despite the narrative device employed, the novel is reasonably faithful to the final script, including the wedding scene, although much of the "humor" with the Cook is missing. What is present is a different explanation for Altaira's menagerie. The film implies that these creatures were brought back to Altair IV by the Krell—an unlikely premise at best. In the novel, Ostrow questions Alta on the presence of earth animals, and is told: "When I was a very little girl, I—I don't think they were here. But then—well, they just came." Later, in Adams' presence, Ostrow asks Morbius: "Were the animals we'd seen the only kinds? Were there any more of them?"

Didn't their existence show that Altair IV must have gone through a similar evolutionary process to Earth's? And wasn't it extraordinary, with all the animals in their terra colors instead of adapting along Altairian lines?"

The narrative continues: "By this time, I [Adams] was plenty interested myself, but Morbius dug in brake-prongs. He said, 'As a matter of fact, Major Ostrow, you have raised the very question upon which I am now working. My researches, however, are not complete.' The way he sounded, he might as well have told Doc to shut up and go away."

When the ship's tractor accidentally runs over one of Alta's monkeys, Ostrow takes it back to the ship and performs a secret autopsy: "Inside, it was a biologist's nightmare. A heart and only two main arteries. No stomach. No intestines, just a single duct. No venous network. A chest cavity, but no lungs in it... and a mass of cross-woven fibrous tissue no more use than a stuffing of cotton!"

Ultimately, it takes Ostrow's fatal visit to the Krell Gateway for him to pull the pieces together: "Morbius, who I said did not strike me as a liar, told you one lie only. But it was epic in proportion. He stated, categorically, that he did not know that final aim of the Krell. He did. And it was his own aim, too. Because he regards himself (megalomaniac that he is) as their rightful, their appointed successor. This aim is simple to state, but so large in conception that it needs contemplation to appreciate. It is to create life. Not to reproduce life by biological function—but to create it. Not from test-tube or seed-bed. By the power of the mind."

This adds a totally new dimension to the entire film, and a much more cogent explanation as to why Alta's tiger turns on her—for it, like the Id creature, is but a creation of Morbius' warped mind. It's unfortunate that this aspect of the story was deleted—its implications are marvelous. One can only assume that someone in the studio hierarchy found it too much to swallow—too close to blasphemy, perhaps—and not an appropriate concept for the industry's foremost film studio to be disseminating.

DON SHAY  
Riverside CA 92506

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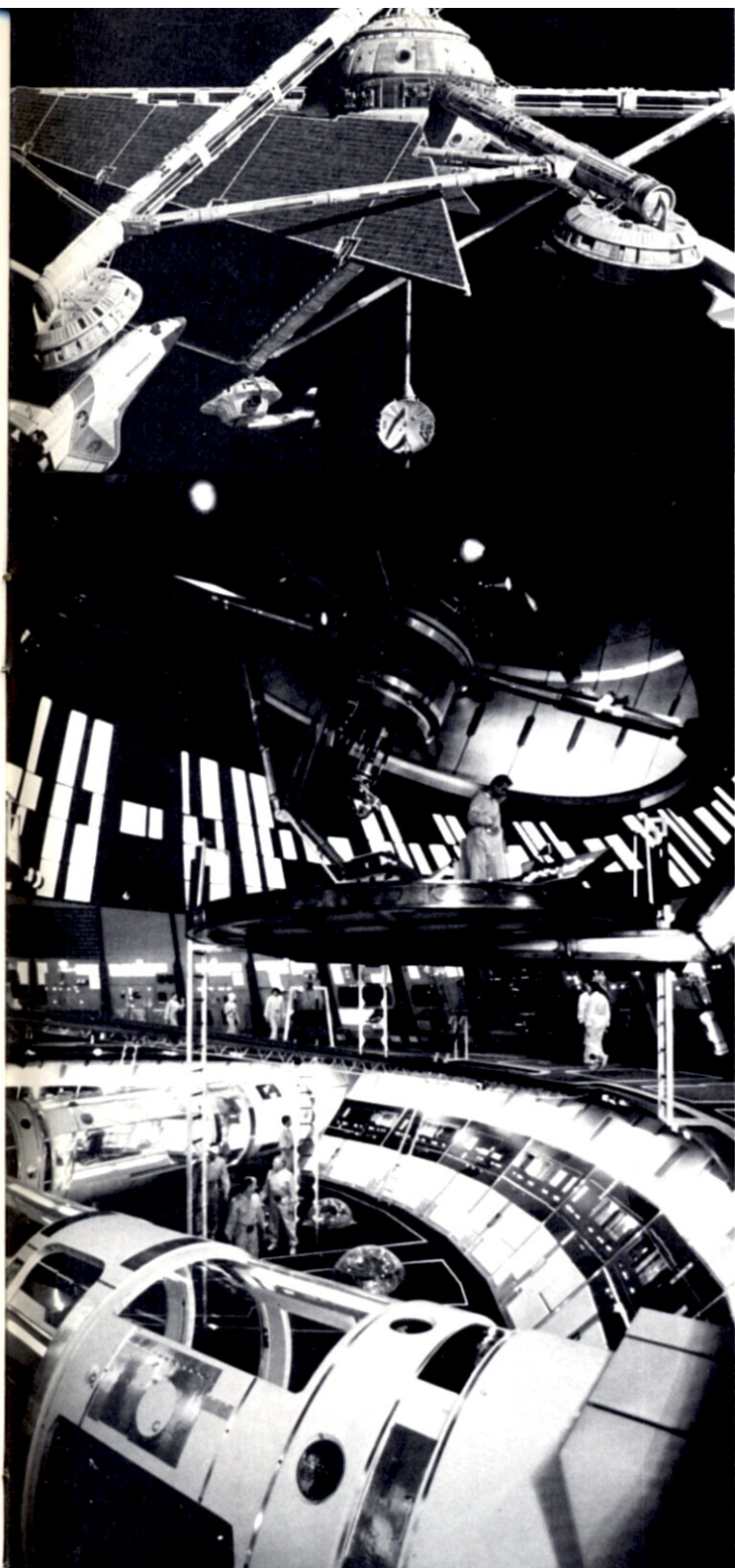
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# PLANET OF DINOSAURS

## Making Dimensional Animation Effects Economical article by Steven S. Wilson

James Aupperle muses, "Before I got into this work as a professional, I'd watch a film like VALLEY OF GWANGI and pick it apart. 'Why does the split screen show up here? Why is the color off?' Now I say 'it's a miracle they were able to do the film at all!'"

"It's a business," says Stephen Czerkas, "You can't afford to waste another week to perfect one little matte line, or shift the color a little bit more, for better balance. That's a hard lesson to learn."

Aupperle and Czerkas are associate producer and executive producer, respectively, of PLANET OF DINOSAURS. Together they designed and supervised the various special effects and, working with producer-director James K. Shea, they have learned the sobering lessons of feature filmmaking.

Audiences like to assign a level of intelligence to filmmakers which corresponds to what they see on the screen. While this may make filmgoers feel better, it is rarely fair to do so. Film is like any other art form: one's first attempt to do something with it is likely to be less than perfect. But unlike less expensive forms, it demands that the first effort be pushed out to try to earn its way in the world. PLANET OF DINOSAURS will soon enter the fray, and

the filmmakers are braced for any and all criticism. Aupperle comments, "When you're putting something on the screen, you can't really offer any excuses for it. An audience has the perfect right to tell you that your film is bad for any reason."

Predictably, the chief criticism of PLANET OF DINOSAURS will be that the live-action is disappointing. The hardest thing to get onto the screen is not good special effects—it is an interesting, well-acted story. The film will come under fire, too, just for being a "dinosaur picture." Fully aware that some 20% of all dimensional animation features have been dinosaur-oriented, the filmmakers nevertheless opted for the time-honored lizards because it was felt that dinosaurs are popular, readily recognized, and easily advertised; they have a star value which will draw audiences to a film with an unknown cast.

The film tells a simple story, detailing the survival efforts of a group of crash-landed future space travelers. They suffer death and internal conflict until they learn to cooperate to overcome the planet's dangers, chief of which is a huge, constantly hungry *tyrannosaurus rex*.

Most of the unknown cast is likely to re-

main so. However, director Shea takes much of the blame for the live action. In trying to both produce and direct his first feature, he found himself swamped with decisions and details, ultimately adopting something of a *laissez-faire* approach to the direction and hoping for the best. He vows not to repeat the mistake. Even the best actors find dimensional animation films difficult to work in, since they play many scenes to empty spaces where animated characters will later be inserted. Such scenes must be carefully planned, fully-explained, and painstakingly rehearsed if the actors are to seem believable in them.

The initial test version of the film has been trimmed considerably for release, with several extraneous live action scenes shortened or completely eliminated. In its current form the pace is much improved; the audience is never left too long without a ration of the film's strong points: Stephen Czerkas' dinosaur models, Douglas Beswick's animation, and James Aupperle's composite work. Unfortunately, one of Jim Danforth's four matte paintings, two moons in the planet's sky, was in an excised sequence. The three which remain are the entrance to the *tyrannosaurus*' cave, the survivors' dam and small settlement,

"Before I got into this work as a professional, I'd watch a film like VALLEY OF GWANGI and pick it apart. Now I say 'It's a miracle they were able to do the film at all!'"

—James Aupperle

Right: From left to right, associate producer James Aupperle, executive producer Steve Czerkas, and animator Douglas Beswick, the effects team responsible for PLANET OF DINOSAURS.



"It's a business. You can't afford to waste another week to perfect one little matte line, or shift the color a little more, for better balance. That's a hard lesson to learn."

—Stephen Czerkas

Shown are three models used in the film, made by Czerkas, an allosaurus (left), a tyrannosaurus (right) and its matching larger-scale head (middle). Right: Ken Hoff's poster art for the film's release.









James Whitworth eyes two small dinosaurs (*genus struthiomimus*) hungrily as he hunts for food, a ship-wrecked space traveler marooned on a PLANET OF DINOSAURS.

and the medium shot of the planet and shuttlecraft seen from space.

Conceptually, the film offers some fresh uses of animation. For example, there were some animated creatures which are just "thrown away," in the sense that they are not part of the major animation events. When Jim (James Whitworth) and Lee (Louie Lawless) are searching for the *tyrannosaurus*' lair, they pass a *coelophysis* which is just standing on a rock. They don't bother it and it doesn't bother them. Earlier in the film the actors walk past a group of grazing *stegosauri* (three small wire-armatured models built and animated by Czerkas). Such shots serve to tone down the "specialness" of the effects, so the animals seem to be a more natural part of the environment; indeed, one begins to feel there's a dinosaur under every boulder. An interesting sidelight on the *coelophysis* is that they were actually from tests made by Aupperle nearly a year before production. They are the only shots done on the old Eastman negative, 5254, the rest of the film being on 5247.

The survivors' fight with an *allosaurus* includes an inventive piece of action. In a desperate attempt to escape the beast, Charlotte (Charlotte Speer) throws dust in its face, causing it to interrupt its attack for a moment to wipe its eyes. Too often such lifelike behavior is denied to animated creatures.

This same *allosaurus* also serves as an excellent dramatic tool for establishing the relatively greater danger posed by the *tyrannosaurus*. The *allosaurus* is wounded and driven off by the humans. A moment later, as it pauses to reflect on its wounds, the enormous jaws of the *tyrannosaurus* suddenly reach in and close over its head. This shot was done with a *tyrannosaurus* head built on a larger scale than that of the complete models.

Editorially, one of the best sequences in the film is that featuring a two-foot spider. It is unexpectedly revealed in a leisurely camera pan (rather than the usual abrupt cut) which follows Nyla (Pamela Bottaro) as she searches for flint in a cave. After she

spots the spider, it runs at her. There follows a series of quick, well-defined cuts as it scrabbles toward her, she falls back, it runs up her leg, and she swats it away. The animated action is matched perfectly to a following live action shot of the actress swatting a full scale mock-up of the spider. Fortunately, too, Bottaro displays a frantic and convincing terror without which the sequence could not be as successful.

The front projection composite in which the spider first runs towards Nyla is interesting for several reasons. First, to get good rich blacks in the cave's shadow areas, Aupperle blacked out corresponding areas on his matte glass (in either front or rear projection, black areas in the background plate tend to photograph grey). Also, Aupperle mounted a small piece of front projection material, cut out to match the contour of a rock in the background image, in front of the main screen in such a way as to allow spider's legs to pass on either side of the cut out, to give the impression that the spider was running over rough ground. Finally, he picked up a few rocks during live action location shooting and placed them along the spider's path so its legs could pass both in front of and behind rocks as it charged.

The spider model had wire legs covered with built-up layers of plastic. Each leg ended in a tiny loop of wire so it could be pinned to a fiberboard floor, preventing unwanted movement of the leg during animation. In shots where the spider runs straight toward the camera, the rocky ground is camouflaged styrofoam.

Aupperle, Czerkas, and Beswick worked to build as much variety as possible into the animation. There are two effective shots in which the camera tilts up on the *tyrannosaurus* as it advances. One of these was done on the miniature cave entrance (built by Czerkas after Danforth completed his excellent matte painting, it matches the painting well). The camera move was a fairly simple matter, since the shot is not a composite. However, the second tilt was done on a rear projected live action background plate. In order to do this, a model

foreground set was built, extending the foreground area considerably below the actual image on the rear projection screen. This created additional area for the camera to cover. So the shot was begun with the miniature filling most of the frame, leaving just the bottom portion of the rear projected image visible. Then, as the *tyrannosaurus* was animated into the shot, the camera was tilted up to reveal more and more of the plate image. To maintain perspective relationships between miniature foreground and projected image, a special tripod head, called a nodal point head, was used.

In general, the effects team successfully stretched the basic front/rear projection techniques to fit all the situations called for (there is no travelling matte in the picture). To be sure, successes were hard won and the team was tested with its share of difficulties, such as the problems inherent in front/rear projection. Duplicating an image from a background plate results in color and contrast changes which are related, not to what the eye sees, but to the vagaries of film's chemical colors and contrast limits. In order to get Czerkas' beautiful *brontosaurus* to photograph as an acceptable shade of grey in a composite, it was painted baby blue. The miniature sets were always painted very different colors from the ones they would ultimately match in the background plates. Experience and testing are the only guides in achieving correct color matches.

Some of the animation shots (individual shots, not sequences) were so complex that Beswick needed two or more days to animate them. In his testing, Aupperle found that a split screen matte sometimes shifted if the set up was left overnight and completed the next day (if the matte moves, it leaves a dark or light line visible in the composite). So, for shots where Beswick needed more than a day, Aupperle usually used complete miniature foregrounds. The use of a miniature set gives the model an area on which to stand, eliminating the need for a matte. Aupperle theorizes that the moving matte problem arose because his matte glass was mounted in wood, and that the wood shrunk or expanded overnight with the changing temperature and humidity.

On shots which required more than a day, there was some concern that lights would burn at different intensities or color temperatures after being turned off for the night and turned on again in the morning. Because of this concern, some animators always complete shots in one session, no matter how long it takes. However, quartz halogen bulbs burn very consistently, so the PLANET OF DINOSAURS technicians decided to experiment. Several shots in the film were done in two or three animation sessions and show no ill effect. Also, on a few shots, burned-out bulbs were replaced in mid-shot without noticeable lighting change.

Once in a while, Beswick actually removed a dinosaur model from a set up during animation. This risky business became necessary when armature joints loosened up, or other repairs were needed. After marking the position of the model and its appendages with surface gauges, he would remove it, repair it, then place it back in the set up and proceed with the animation. He was able to do this without getting a



*Top and Middle: A two-foot long cave spider menaces Nyla (Pamela Bottaro), as she searches for flint. The front-projection set-up used to achieve the final composite is shown. Optical expert Jim Aupperle blacked out the area above the spider on his foreground matte glass to provide a deep rich black shadow area in the cave. Rocks picked up on location were placed on the tabletop set-up so that the legs of the spider model could pass both in front of and behind the rocks as it charged. A piece of front-projection material shaped to the contour of a rock is mounted in front of the main screen at right for the same reason. Front-projection material instead of a rock was needed in this instance because the hand of the actress in the live action footage also had to appear in the same area. Bottom: Animator Douglas Beswick manipulates the tyranosaurus model as it crashes through a stockade, part of a miniature foreground set.*

perceptible jump in the projected action.

Some problems were related to restricted time and money, and were solved by invention. For example, as the survivors swim to shore after crash landing in the lake, their shuttle craft sinks slowly in the background. To get a sort of bubbling water effect at the waterline, the best approach would be to film bubbling water in proper scale in a darkened tank, then superimpose this image over that of a sinking ship. In this case, there wasn't time to shoot the bubbling, so Czerkas made a series of animated "waves," actually wave-shaped slots cut in sheets of paper. The background plate of water was projected through these slots on a separate pass (cycled like animation cels), double exposing just the tiny area along the waterline while creating an oscillating effect there.

The ship sinks very slowly and animating it was quite tedious. It moved only a foot or so in real space, and required almost microscopic frame-by-frame movements of the model (this and the other space ship models were designed and built by Stephen C. Wathen). It was mounted on a pedestal which could be cranked up or down. Aupperle placed a wheel, marked off with 360 degrees, on the crankshaft, turning it just a few degrees per frame. For all that, the shot garnered one of the most unexpected complaints the film has yet received. At a Hollywood screening, an outraged viewer familiar with the lake snarled, "I didn't buy that scene at all. Everyone knows Hanson Dam isn't that deep!"

The background plates for some shots have a flat, washed-out look. The first unit cinematographer failed to follow Aupperle's instructions for exposing the plates, severely under-exposing them. Under-exposed negative can be printed up (prints of the plates were made at DeLuxe laboratories), but very little can be done about the washed-out look that results from doing so. There was neither time nor money for reshooting the plates.

Inexperience led the effects workers into some unforeseen problems. For example, the *brontosaurus* sequence was designed to use an interesting composite technique. The dinosaur was placed on a miniature set with a photo blow-up background (simply a large photo instead of a projected image). The live actors were reflected into the scene via a projector mounted to one side of the set up, its image bounced off a beam-splitter (or two-way mirror) mounted directly in front of the camera. The live continued on page 46







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1) Jim Danforth at work on the glass matte painting of the settlement and dam seen at the end of the film. 2) Danforth's matte painting of two moons in the sky, a casualty of the editing done to tighten up the film's pace. 3) The shuttlecraft, as it heads for the nearest planet after the loss of the mothership, spaceship model by Stephen C. Wathen, planet painting by Danforth. A fourth matte painting by Danforth, of the Tyrannosaurus' cave, is shown 7:2:44, in an earlier article on the film. 4) Doug Beswick repositions the model of the Allosaurus in a rear-screen set-up. Note angled animation stage at lower left, with holes for tie-downs. Beswick joined Danforth to work on TIMEGATE after his work on the film. 5) James Aupperle takes care in carving away the horn of the model Czerkasaurus, making it appear to penetrate the body of Harvey Shain. Note the tiny



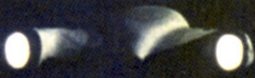
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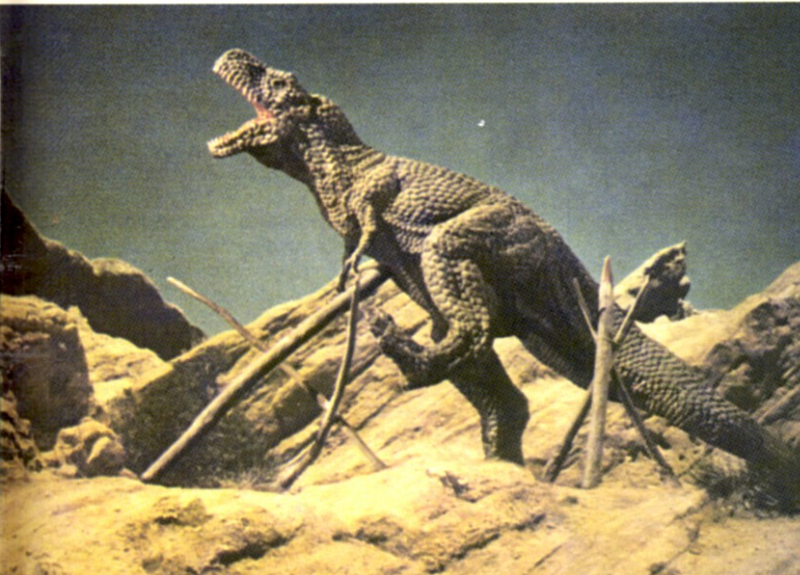


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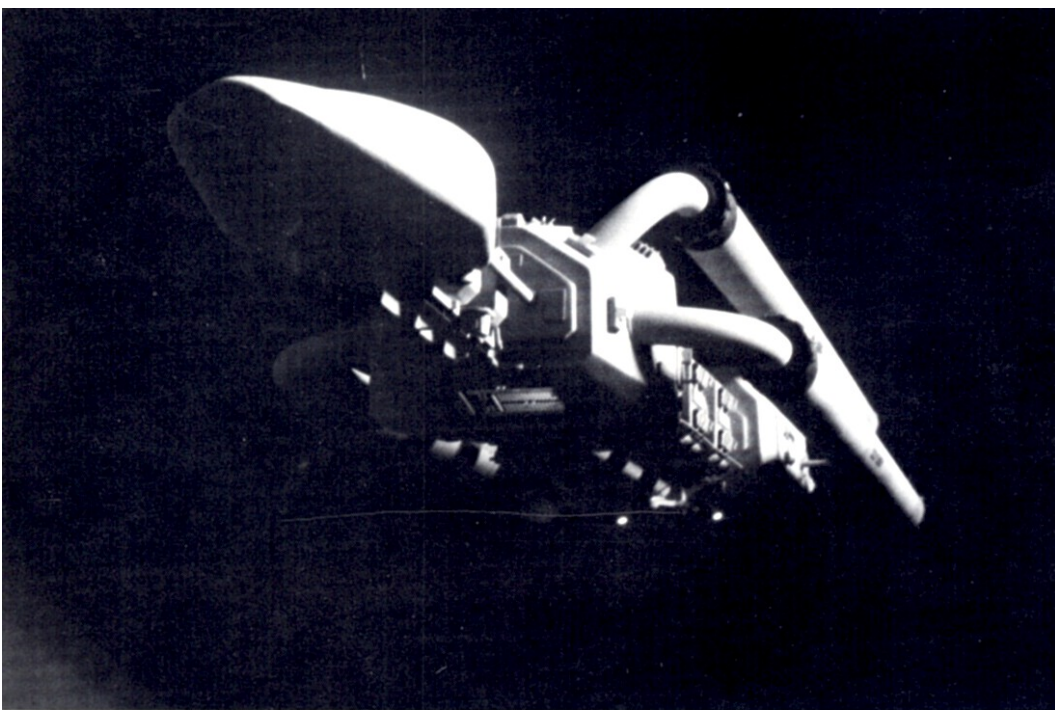
6) Steve Czerkas' replica of the Rhedosaurus, the fanciful dinosaur in Ray Harryhausen's *THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS*, which gets quickly dispatched by the Tyrannosaurus as sort of an in-joke. 7) A pokey polacanthus makes a meal for the explorers. 8) The rear-screen set-up used to animate the model of the Tyrannosaurus as it impales itself on the settlers' defenses. The black at bottom is the matte which obscures the animation stage and into which the foreground elements of the background scene will later be printed. Shown just touching the model's head and tail are surface gauges which help the animator reposition the model for each single frame exposure. 9) The final composite scene as shown in the film. 10) James Aupperle takes a light-meter reading before shooting the Tyrannosaurus' cave, a Czerkas miniature set.

6

10







Stephen C. Wathen's model of the mothership. Wathen, a San Francisco-based model maker, also built the shuttlecraft miniature which crashlands on the PLANET OF DINOSAURS.

image was lined up to fit an area of miniature brush obscured by a matte placed on glass in the set—the matte was necessary to keep the image from ghosting. However, once this set-up was complete, the *brontosaurus* was sandwiched so tightly between the background panes of glass and what-not that it was almost unreachable. Limited studio space prohibited changing the set up. Ultimately Czerkas animated the creature himself because, as he puts it, "I had such an amazing amount of talent—and I was skinny."

It is unfortunate that the *brontosaurus* could not have been featured more prominently. It is one of the best of Czerkas' fine models. The movement of its head demonstrates his ability to sculpt within and around the limitations of a foam rubber body, which will not stretch and bend like real flesh and skin. The wrinkles on its body seem perfectly natural, thus making movement even more lifelike. One only wishes the animal would move more. It was originally intended to walk (the model is fully armatured), but the confined composite set up made walking impractical. On top of all this, during animation one of the panes of glass picked up reflections of Czerkas, and the entire sequence (except for close-ups of the *brontosaurus*' head, shot later) had to be reshot at the cost of three days' work.

Incidentally, there was also a problem with the live action in the seemingly cursed *brontosaurus* scene. Sharp-eyed viewers may notice the actors' motion is frozen at the beginning of the first shot. This is because there was not enough footage of the actors sitting still and looking at the dinosaur to cover the animated action, so the brief freeze frame was used to keep the actors in place longer.

Other problems were simply typical of the kind which crop up on any animation film, and which are met with in moments of quiet anguish in the animation studio. One of the plates shot at the primary location, Vasquez Rocks County Park (California), captured an unwary park visitor in the distant background. He was too far

away to be reached quickly, so, after the whole cast and crew shouted in unison, "MOVE!" to no avail, the shot was made when he crossed in front of a shadow area. Then, during animation, Aupperle was able to eliminate his image by placing a small piece of screen mesh between the rear projector and the rear projection screen (this is also a common way to put shadows under animated creatures in shots where they aren't moving too much). The mesh darkened the area enough to blot out the interloper without making the shadow area look unnaturally black.

PLANET OF DINOSAURS is one of the very few dimensional animation pictures to make extensive use of both front and rear projection, and James Aupperle offers some interesting comparisons of the two processes.

Some shots had to be rear or front projected due to characteristics of Aupperle's projectors, which he assembled himself, and which he now plans to modify. For example, in the jarring shot showing Harvey (Harvey Shain) being gored by a horned dinosaur, the animal's head nearly fills the screen, so the background plate image had to be quite small, just a few inches across, to make the model's head look that big. Aupperle's front projector lens could not project so small an image without putting the projector too close to the screen, so it was rear-projected. Also, front projection screen material was designed for full scale projection, that is, projection of background images large enough for use with live actors and full scale sets. It's probable that the glass beads in its highly reflective surface would become visible, looking something like film grain, if too small a screen area were photographed.

To get the violent upward movement of Harvey at the moment of impact with the dinosaur, the crew simply filmed him against a cloudless sky and swiftly tipped the camera down and to one side. In order to give the impression that the dinosaur's horn actually penetrates the man, Aupperle (who animated this and the *struthiomimus* sequence) carved the horn away, a little

with each frame, keeping its blunted tip aligned with the point of contact on the actor's body, and painting a little "blood" on the horn to aid the illusion. (To clear up potential confusion about this "horned dinosaur," I should mention that it was referred to as both a *triceratops* and as a *styracosaurus* in the first article on the film [6:4:57]. For dinosaur purists, it is in fact closer to a *monoclonius*. Actually it was referred to as a *Czerkasaurus* during production).

Generally, lining up a matte is easier in front projection than in rear. In either case, the matte is usually just black, opaque tape placed on glass, mounted between the camera and the screen. The tape is put on in many tiny pieces, in order to follow the edge of some part of the background image. In front projection, the matte casts a shadow on the screen image. The shadow can be seen without looking through the camera, giving an accurate indication of what part of the image the matte is obscuring. In rear projection, since the image comes from behind a translucent screen, the matte casts no shadow, and one must look through the camera to check alignment of each piece of tape. It is best to have two people when aligning a rear projection matte, one to look through the camera and direct the other.

Aupperle used the dual screen technique for his front projection (Dennis Muren was the earliest to use this process in a feature film, EQUINOX). This allows one to photograph both portions of a split screen matte simultaneously. With rear projection, they must be shot separately, running the film through the camera twice. The dual screen technique saves time and sometimes alleviates registration problems.

Aupperle found rear projection most useful when he needed to color-match a miniature set. His method of matching colors involves taking a Polaroid still of the set up to get an idea of the basic colors required. This is a simple matter in a rear projection set up, but is impractical with front projection because an accurate, exposure-balanced photograph of the composite may be taken only from the animation camera lens position. The screen image is very dim when viewed from any other angle. This would mean removing the animation camera and putting the Polaroid in its place during set up, which would be too time consuming.

Most of the film's animation is by Douglas Beswick. His work is carefully done, precisely controlled and exhibits an interesting restraint. His creatures are deliberately more ponderous and less aggressive than the quick-tempered, fast-moving dinosaurs of Ray Harryhausen's VALLEY OF GWANGI and ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. Beswick's animals reflect interpretations of dinosaurs as ordinary, sluggish, dumb animals. His *polacanthus*, conked on the head with a stone club, dies a quiet, unceremonious death. It stands for an instant after the blow, head bobbing in confusion, then drops in its tracks. Only the *tyrannosaurus*, *allosaurus*, and nasty spider, attack without provocation. The other creatures would seem just as happy to ignore the humans.

Beswick's growing mastery of his craft is perhaps best illustrated in the brief struggle between the *tyrannosaurus* and the "rhedosaurus" (the latter being Czerkas' copy of Ray Harryhausen's BEAST FROM



Top: Stephen Czerkas, who created the stop-motion models used in the film, animates his own brontosaurus. The background image is a blow-up of a still photograph taken on location. Not seen in this pose is a foreground matte glass, used to composite live action footage of the actors in the bush area at left. The live actors were reflected into the scene from a projector mounted o.s. left, bounced off a beam splitter (or two-way mirror) mounted in front of the camera. The foreground matte glass, when in place, made for very cramped quarters during animation and unfortunately curtailed the mobility of the stop motion puppet. Middle: Czerkas' clay sculpture of the allosaurus, ready for a plaster half-mold to be made, used to cast the fully armatured puppet. Bottom: Czerkas poses with his nearly finished clay sculpture of the brontosaurus.

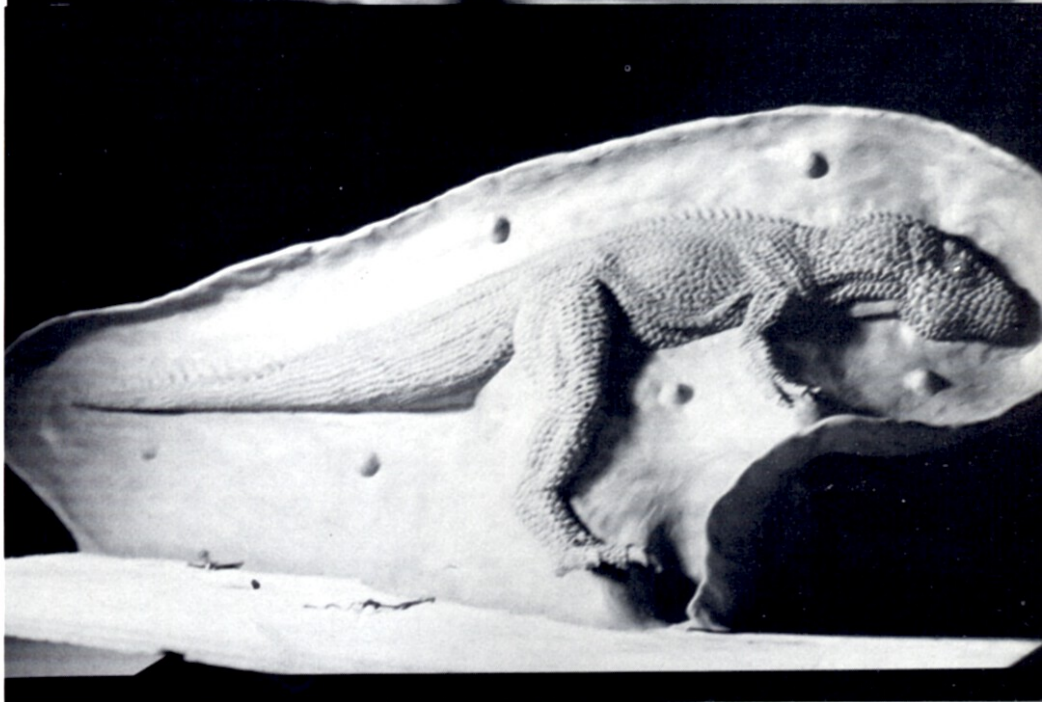
20,000 FATHOMS). The *tyrannosaurus* snatches the *rhedosaurus* off the top of a rock and holds it by the neck. As it squirms helplessly, the *tyrannosaurus* maintains its death grip with chilling reptilian detachment, very like a snake swallowing a rat. When its victim dies, the *tyrannosaurus* simply walks off with the prize hanging from its mouth. Significantly, the *rhedosaurus* remains absolutely limp as it is carried, a singularly difficult effect to achieve in dimensional animation, since every joint of a model is quite stiff. If not carefully repositioned on each frame, with constant reference to an imaginary pull of gravity, the *rhedosaurus* would have looked rigid and feather-light, lurching about as the *tyrannosaurus* moved.

Czerkas sculpted and cast all the dinosaurs. He also built the full-scale dead *polacanthus* and *struthiomimus*. There were two identical *tyrannosaurus* models (the second needed as the first began to wear out). The larger scale *tyrannosaurus* head was used in the *allosaurus* shot, mentioned above, and in the close-up showing Derna (Derna Wyldé) being killed.

With it all behind them, and with much experience gained, the filmmakers are preparing to launch a new film. Will it be another dinosaur picture? The answer comes back a resounding, "No!" Now searching for appropriate material, they are united in a desire to do a better, fresher story. Aupperle, for example, would like to make use of the "graphic visual that you have with animation, but still make it mysterious; keep that strange and atmospheric element that you got in those old Val Lewton movies."

However, while animation is an exciting tool, it imposes some limitations on plot, subject matter, and budget. Just any good story won't do. It has to meet certain requirements and, inevitably, some concessions will be made to salability and practicality. It might be exciting to do a film wherein animation is used subtly and sparingly, but such a project, Aupperle concedes, "has the immediate effect of putting us out of a job, which is probably the same thing that occurs to other animators throughout the industry."

So, like those before them, these filmmakers are faced with generating a film's effects first and story second. It is a path replete with pit-falls and disappointments which claim good drama as a first victim. Still, Hollywood is showing more interest in dimensional animation now than ever before. Perhaps some of the town's best scriptwriters and story tellers will at last be drawn into collaboration with its special effects experts. □





## Lyle A. Conway on the creation of stop-motion models.

"I designed a sort of upright, two-legged creature, the Wolf Lizard, an Ymir kind of thing, because it's what they wanted. I told them I thought it looked like warmed-over Harryhausen. The arms jut back in that very dramatic type of move that has almost become his patent. It had the old goat-leg that he uses on everything. Harryhausen's Cyclops is so good because it was one of the first models to use that, but it has been copied far too much since. Happily, the Troll Lady and Gremlin I also designed for the film have an entirely different look."

Shown right is the Troll Lady, one of three stop-motion puppets designed, sculpted and painted by Lyle A. Conway for TIMEWARP, to be released this Fall by Compass Int'l.

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# TIMEWARP